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CONTENTS

The Unwelcome Mrs. Hatch	<i>Mrs. Burton Harrison</i>	1
À la Morte	<i>McCrea Pickering</i>	48
Love à la Mode	<i>John Barker</i>	48
The Chaperon	<i>Ella Wheeler Wilcox</i>	49
At Mezra	<i>Harold Macardell</i>	50
The Whirl of Chance*	<i>Henry Goelet McVickar</i>	51
The Mansion	<i>Bliss Carman</i>	71
Sleep	<i>Lila Munro Tainter</i>	72
Tempering the Wind	<i>E. Gardner Bentley</i>	73
A Ballade of Regret	<i>John Winwood</i>	81
The Barrier of the Past	<i>Gertrude F. Lynch</i>	81
A Serious Masque	<i>Gwendolen Overton</i>	89
Embarrassing	<i>Edwin L. Sabin</i>	96
The Loves of Mr. Heath	<i>Flora Bigelow Dodge</i>	97
Contrast	<i>Edith Sessions Tupper</i>	109
Over London Bridge	<i>Albert Hardy</i>	110
A Burning Shame	<i>Andrew Comstock McKenzie</i>	111
In an Egyptian Garden	<i>Clinton Scollard</i>	114
The Sofa with the Claw Feet	<i>John Regnault Ellyson</i>	115
Resurrection	<i>Theodosia Garrison</i>	121
Friendship?	<i>Edith Bigelow</i>	122
The Broken Baton	<i>Margaret Mary Hills</i>	123
Daily Bread	<i>T. G.</i>	128
All That's Left Them	<i>Dorothy Dorr</i>	128
The Current of Things	<i>Edgar Fawcett</i>	129
Excused!	<i>Ethel M. Kelley</i>	140
Frissons de Nos Âmes	<i>Michel Corday</i>	141
The Death-Child	<i>Charlotte Becker</i>	145
William Tell Up to Date	<i>R. K. Munkittrick</i>	146
The Mestiza	<i>Mrs. William Allen</i>	147
The Fallen Star	<i>Elisabeth R. Finley</i>	152
The Modern Way	<i>E. Percy Neville</i>	152
The Little Chaperon	<i>Michael Carmichael</i>	153
How Sweet the Roses!	<i>George Birdseye</i>	160

*\$500 prize story.

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PRIZES FOR JOKES

1st prize of \$50 awarded to Alex. Ricketts.
2nd prize, \$10, J. J. O'Connell.
3rd prize, \$10, Tom P. Morgan.
4th prize, \$10, A. C. Taylor.
5th prize, \$10, C. A. Lee.

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THE UNWELCOME MRS. HATCH

By Mrs. Burton Harrison

IN a well-furnished room of a good hotel in the smart residential quarter of New York a stout-armed Irishwoman was in the act of drawing together a pair of chintz curtains over an alcove bed. The neat little brass bedstead, the pattern of the chintz and of the Brussels carpet, the ash furniture, the electric fixtures, the lace window curtains and the steam radiator, like gilded organ-pipes, had been so often imprinted on the retina of Miss Biddy McCluskey's eye, in her daily whiskings through many such apartments as sixth floor chambermaid of the Stuyvesantia, that it was strange she should single out the temporary owner of this particular apartment for meditative comment.

"She's a beaut, is No. 1089," she observed to a bellboy who had come up with a parcel. "Not so young as some, but the real thing in manners. Must ha' kep' lots o' help in her time, private house, Fifth Avenue style, like the ones I always lived wid before I took up wid hotels. Tell you something, Jimmy—she ain't more'n laid on the outside o' that bed all night, and she come all the way from Californy, so she says."

"Aw, wot are ye givin' me!" was the self-sufficient answer. "I don't advertise myself for no mind reader, but I see No. 1089 wuz in trouble w'en I lifted her bags up here last night. Guv me a quarter for myself just to take a tellygram down to the office below, let alone anudder quarter an' a penny for de stamp, an' den dropped herself down dere on de sofa, and was tuk wid a fit o' de shivers. See?"

"You didn't happen to *read* that telegram, sonny?" asked Miss McCluskey, while indulging in the lightning act of passing a feather duster over smooth surfaces conveniently at hand.

"Marry me on yer next Sunday out, an' I'll tell yer all my secrets," retorted the boy, provokingly, then carried his sauce and his buttony exterior out of reach of her avenging duster.

Scarcely had the door of No. 1089 closed behind the bellboy, and Miss McCluskey relapsed into a long, leisurely survey of her charms in the mirror, when there was a hesitating knock. To the chambermaid's tart invitation to come in responded a mysterious, battered-looking creature, with a futile attempt at gentility in his get-up, who insinuated himself into the aperture he had created and gave a comprehensive glance around the room.

"Well, what's up?" asked the McCluskey, rebukingly.

"Don't let me incommode you, miss," was the suave answer. "It is only—er—a little business I have with the lady. She won't want to miss me, sure."

"She ain't in," snapped the chambermaid, whose life was spent on guard against wayfarers and strangers.

"Oh, never mind. I'll wait," returned the visitor, complacently.

Somehow, with all her experience, Biddy thought she had never met such shifty yet universally inquisitive eyes. They seemed to bore through wood and metal, looking-glass and stuffs, and to read the in-

nermost motives of her being. The poor thing thought of the dollar bill she had found in the bureau drawer in No. 1101 a day or two before, and of an embroidered pocket handkerchief, tucked between the tufted seat and back of an armchair in No. 1090, that she had appropriated without mentioning the fact at the desk. She faltered as she tried to regain her usual masterful tone.

"If the lady wanted youse so much, why didn't you send up your card?"

"She'll understand," the man answered, pushing further in, and at last standing on the hearth rug, while still continuing his rapid survey of the room and its contents.

"I remember, now, I heard her mention down the tube that if a gentleman calls she'll be back at ten-thirty, sharp."

"A gentleman, eh?" said the stranger, with animation.

"So it ain't you; see?" replied Miss McCluskey, who was regaining her usual form. "Come, now; git outside, or I'll call down the trumpet and have the porters up."

"I'm afraid you are hasty, my dear miss," said the stranger, dropping into a chair. "The truth is, you suspect me; but a lady of your tact and intelligence should know better."

As he spoke he was reading the labels on the trunk nearest him—a lady's dress-basket, covered with tarpaulin, smart, up-to-date and newly lettered.

"A long journey Mrs. Hatch has had from 'Frisco, hasn't she? Mr. Hatch with her?" he went on.

"Mr. Nobody's with her!" exclaimed the woman, indignantly. "If yer want to ask questions, go down to the office."

"Come to think of it, I won't wait, but will just leave a note saying I'll call again," observed the visitor, as an apparent afterthought. "She'll be so sorry to have missed her old friend!"

Gliding into a chair set behind a fanciful and uncomfortable little hotel desk strewn with a few open papers and writing materials, he affected to scribble a few lines on a sheet of

white paper. In the brief time that he sat there even Miss McCluskey's suspicious eyes did not keep pace with his swift investigation of everything within his reach—though she observed he slipped every drawer open noiselessly and peeped inside.

Apparently nothing rewarded this exploration by Mrs. Hatch's old friend. In a very few moments he got up, crumpled the paper he had written and put it in his pocket, declaring he had changed his mind and would leave a message for her at the office; then, wishing the ample Biddy a polite good-day, started for the door.

"Good luck go wid ye!" observed the woman, with animus.

"Good-bye, miss; no offense, I hope, but—" and he slipped a dollar into her hand—"No. 1089 is O. K., as far as you have seen?"

"I'm not up till yer low questions, anyway," returned Biddy, indignantly pushing the money back into his grasp.

"On the square, savey? Keeps no company, orders no cigarettes or cocktails in her room, uses no hypodermics or morphine?" he explained, pleasantly.

"An' is it yer 'old friend' yer asking that about?" cried she, angrily. "Sure I know yer sort at last. Ye'r a detective, bad cess to yer ugly mug. She's a perfect lady, I tell ye, and that's all ye'll get out o' me, if ye stop here till ye take root."

"No offense, no offense," repeated the man, imperturbably, as she fairly forced him into retreat and slammed and locked the door.

The next knock revealed nothing more alarming than a District Messenger boy carrying a neat little parcel, wrapped in jeweler's style, and sealed at either end.

"Special, C. O. D.," recited the lad, briefly. "Told me at office lady left orders she'd be in at 10.30."

"You look like the right article, so wait there," replied the maid, leaving the door on the crack while she finished her task, hurrying into seclusion a pair of shoes with trim buckles, and venturing to try around her own

throat a long feather boa, before she laid it in a drawer.

Punctually, as a bell in a neighboring clock tower struck the half-hour after ten, the soft rustle of a woman's skirts came up the corridor from the elevator door and paused before No. 1089.

"Oh! you are there? That's very nice," said a peculiarly soft and low cadenced voice. "I see the door's open, so the maid must be still inside. Come in, please, till I settle our account."

Once in a while there is found a District Messenger boy who has human emotions, and this one responded, as did the rest of the world in general to Marian Hatch's greeting, with a smile. She was a tall, slim woman, youthful of form and face, and—though the wells of her deep eyes were brimming with the emotions of sad experience—extremely pretty still, graceful in every one of her impulsive movements, and of a personal distinction in appearance and bearing that marked her as belonging to the higher-cultured class. Her tailor-made costume of dark gray was severely cut, but stylish, while her large black hat and nodding plumes made a picture of the charming face beneath, and she held a couple of American beauty roses in her hand.

"You have done my room nicely, and just in time," she said to the maid, who, assuming an attitude of subservience foreign to her usual demeanor, responded with a grin, and softly disappeared.

Then the lady, taking off her gloves, veil and hat, threw them carelessly on the sofa, and relieving the boy of his parcel, dropped into a chair by the little table in the centre of the room. As she broke the seals she glanced with happy eyes at the box's contents, then at the accompanying bill.

"Quite right. Here is the money. Receipt the bill, please," she went on, holding the box and falling into a sort of half-dream, while the lad, producing a stub pencil, moistened it on his lips and stretching the paper she

had handed him on the wall, signed it laboriously.

The messenger had been gone for some time, when she started from her reverie and took up her open portemonnaie from the table.

"Bless me!" she exclaimed. "That innocent Mercury little knew how nearly this payment has cleaned me out. But never mind, so long as it gives *her* pleasure! Now, I must get into shape to receive a visit from my traveling companion across the continent. He will be punctual. He has all the virtues, has Jack Adrian."

Another knock at her much-beleaguered door, and Jimmy entered, card on tray, mechanically repeating:

"Gentleman for No. 1089."

"Ask the gentleman to come up," she said, after a glance at the card. Then, with a hasty look at herself in the mirror, she resumed her seat, taking up her roses and toying with them a little nervously.

"I wanted, of all things, to receive Jack Adrian as a lady should," passed through her mind. "Dear, honest boy, he knows as little as the District Messenger boy does how near I am to being stone broke. After my journey here, and sundry purchases, I can afford to keep this room just one week—and after that, the deluge!"

Then she was shaking hands, simply and cordially, with a young man of handsome face and cheery presence. He carried a large bunch of lilies-of-the-valley wrapped in soft paper, which, with some awkwardness, he offered for her acceptance.

"You see, I took you at your word, and called abominably early," he said. "Have these? I picked them up at a florist's as I came along in the hansom, and thought maybe you'd like 'em."

"Like them!" cried Marian, rapturously burying her face in their fragrance. "If you knew how sinfully I always covet flowers—all flowers—everybody's flowers! I couldn't resist buying these poor roses in the street just now. Yours are so beautifully fresh and crisp! They will

last for days and keep Spring in my heart!"

"Glad you're pleased," he answered, sitting opposite her, hat and stick in hand, the image of conventional respectability and wholesomeness. "I'd meant to drop in anyway this morning to ask if you'd rested after our tiresome journey, and whether you'd met your friends all right at this hotel."

She started a little, but smiled beamingly.

"Oh, I'm quite rested, thank you—you found my telegram at your club?"

"Yes, and came at once. What can I do for you, Mrs. Hatch?"

"You've been doing so much for me for days past," she answered, lightly, "I daren't ask for more. Always thinking of me; always caring for me, a perfect stranger—a son couldn't have been kinder. I wish you were my son."

"That's pretty ambitious, isn't it, from a woman of your age to a man of mine?" he said, jokingly. "By the way, my father and mother have come down from their country home, and are in town for a purpose. I thought, if it would be agreeable to you, I'd like to bring my mother here to call."

A little flush came to her cheek as she again rested it among the lilies. "How kind you are!" she repeated. "How nice for your mother to own you! I never had a son. In my short married life I had a daughter, whom I lost twelve years ago. She was just five."

"And you have lost your husband since?" said young Adrian, gently. "Poor little woman, that was hard lines, wasn't it?"

Mrs. Hatch tried to answer. Her voice broke, and tears filled her eyes. While Adrian was wishing the conversation had not taken that particular turn, she recovered herself and spoke brusquely, and to his utter confusion.

"Mr. Adrian, I sent for you to come here because I've been deceiving you."

Adrian started visibly, but con-

trolled his feelings to answer her in his usual jocular tone.

"Don't say that. I've been thinking of you as almost my ideal woman."

"Almost, not quite," she answered. "The ideal is the girl you're engaged to marry."

"Who told you I'm engaged to marry?" he asked, reddening to the ears.

"As if you could hope to spend several days in solid talk with a clever woman and not have her find that your big, manly heart was gone out of your keeping. Why, you foolish boy, I knew it the first day—then," she added, dropping her voice, "I was convinced when you never spoke of her to me, a mere traveling acquaintance."

"Granted, then, that I have that good fortune, and am very soon to be married," he said, hurrying; "will you give me your good wishes?"

"Yes! oh, yes—a thousand of them!" she exclaimed. "Happy boy, and happier girl, since she is sure of the husband of her choice. But I mustn't talk of that. I must go on telling you about myself."

"Must you?" he said, vaguely uneasy. "Why?"

"In the first place, because I'm awfully superstitious, and I'm afraid the object of my journey east will fail if I begin by letting you believe a lie."

"A lie! that's not a favorite word of mine, certainly," Adrian said, getting up, walking to the window and then returning to his place.

"You know, I told you I was a widow coming to New York to visit my husband's family," she said, in a clear voice. "Well, that's false. I'm a waif, a social outcast. For twelve years not one of my husband's family has spoken to me. They wouldn't touch me with a pair of tongs."

Adrian recoiled. He could not believe it was his merry, debonair comrade of yesterday who was saying such hateful words to him.

"*He* is living and *he* got the divorce. You understand? *He* got the divorce. No, don't try to answer me. . . . I was a young, heedless,

reckless, desperate girl, and I did what forced me to step down from my pinnacle in good society . . . to go out into darkness . . . never to see my child again."

Her voice broke in sobs. Through the open window came the rush and jar of the great city's everlasting movement. He was conscious of wanting awfully to get out into the open street again.

"I wish you hadn't sent for me," he said, finally. "I'd much rather have continued to think of you as I did."

"Oh, I know it," she answered, forlornly. "And my excuse for having misled you is miserably weak. I only wanted to get back for a little while into the place I've forfeited. I saw you respected me, and I liked the feeling. It was so jolly to be squired and waited on by a man of my own sort—above all, to be believed in."

"In what way can I serve you now?" he said, striving to let no change appear in his voice.

"Oh, in no way." He thought there was a tinge of recklessness in her tone. "I'm not going to sponge any longer on your gallantry. I'm quite sufficient for myself, thank you. For years I've been taking care of that individual, working hard and living honestly. . . . Mr. Adrian, it was the kindest thing you ever did to propose bringing your mother to call on me."

Adrian's ready blood rushed again to his temples. He was literally oppressed for words to answer her.

"I only hope it'll be possible to find her disengaged, Mrs. Hatch," he stammered at last, because her eyes were fixed beseechingly on his.

She sprang to her feet, letting her bunch of lilies fall to the floor. Her voice sounded sharp as she cried out:

"That's not my real name! I'm not Mrs. Hatch, any more than you're Mr. Hatch! It's just a stupid, commonplace business name I took to work under. Oh! don't try to soothe me now; I can't help my quick temper, and I see what my honesty has done

for me. It's the same old story. If you're going to condole with me, don't!"

She swept up the room stormily, breathing hard. Adrian did not dare to stir.

"You are quite unlike yourself," he ventured, in the end.

"You'd better go, Mr. Adrian," said the poor creature, stopping before him suddenly. "Now, while I'm hard and horrid! My idyl's over. For a week I've been in my old place in life; now I've relapsed. Presently I'll be only a bubble, burst on the sea of your recollections. A month hence I'll have faded from your thoughts, and by next year, should you pass me in the street, you'll say, 'Where *have* I seen that woman?' So, you see, I'll not trouble you long. It's you that will trouble me."

"I swear I'd like to help you," cried the young man, fervently.

"You can't, my dear boy! you just can't!" she answered, touched by his evident sincerity. "No man can but one, and he's made of iron and india rubber. He's coming here presently."

She shivered.

"The man who—was your husband?" he asked, hesitatingly.

"Yes; all this while he's let people think I'm dead. But he well knows I've been living alone, toiling to keep the wolf from the door! He's always had an eye—several eyes—on his lost treasure. He's never ceased to spy on me—detectives—everything horrid; but I've never once asked him for help or anything. I have to now, for there's one I love better than my pride."

"Your child, too, is living?"

"Yes, with them—he's married again—and I'm just breaking my heart to see her! Think of me having to ask a favor of a man who has trampled me in the mire! Oh, but she's worth it. If he's flesh and blood he can't refuse me!"

"My dear lady," Adrian said, softly, when her tears were somewhat checked, "you must know this is very painful to me, the more so because I

feel so disgustingly useless in the case."

"I told you you couldn't help!" exclaimed Marian. "Don't mind my crying. It eases the pain. Every mile of our journey the train was saying, 'You are this much—this much—nearer to your darling!' Oh! how foolish I am to struggle when I need so much strength for what's to come!"

She dried her eyes with a tiny web of lace and linen, so ridiculously inadequate for its purpose that she crumpled it up into a ball, threw it across the room and laughed.

"Come, cheer me up a bit!" she cried. "Tell me about the girl that's to be your wife."

Now it was Adrian's turn to experience a sudden change of manner. A moment before he had been ready, at all hazards, to rush into the lists and champion this delightful victim of man's inhumanity. But when it came to bringing the name of his fiancée between them, he grew chill.

"What do you wish to hear?" he said, in a constrained voice.

"The usual things. Is she fair or dark, young or old, merry or sad, meek or spirited? I hope, for her sake, nature hasn't been so cruel as to make her impulsive, jealous, fiery on provocation, repenting as soon as she has offended, a fond lover, a hot hater, keen for revenge, but ready to lie down in the dust and let herself be walked on by one she loves! That's me, Mr. Adrian—the worst kind of an outfit for a wife. Better be cold, callous, self-worshipping, wearing an armor, never out of temper, never ruffled by a man's passions or emotions; pursuing the even tenor of an utterly selfish way, no matter who else goes under in the crash of life. That's my successor. *She gets on splendidly!*"

"I think you are right," said Adrian, rising. "It doesn't make you happier to see anyone just now. I'd better say good-bye."

"Oh, don't mind my being a little catty about—that one," said Marian,

nodding mysteriously. "But I won't do it any more. You were going to tell me about your bride-to-be."

"There's really nothing to tell," said the young man, still upon his feet to go, "but that she is very young; gentle, childlike, lovely to look upon, and entirely without experience in the world."

"I was all that—even lovely to look upon, they said—when I married at seventeen. Think of what, in other hands, I might now have been! Oh! I see you are afraid to have me go on. Men so hate a woman who makes scenes. Good-bye, then, but before we part——"

She paused, looking at him with a gaze all gentleness and pathos.

"What, Mrs. Hatch?" asked Adrian, very softly.

Marian hung her proudly set little head.

"Say you'll try to forget there's one doorway in my past with a black veil hanging over it! Say you believe I'm not altogether bad!"

Adrian clasped her hand.

"If ever you need me, send. I'll come at a minute's notice. You'll see then, Mrs. Hatch, whether I misjudge you."

"Thank you, thank you!" she cried. "Please continue to be as happy as you are good. Oh! why aren't all men like you! Your wife will never be tempted——"

At once he stiffened; the smile died out.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Hatch," he said, interrupting her.

"I see," she answered, sadly, "I mustn't cross the gulf between me and her. But you can't help my praying for her when I do for you. Now go—please go."

She pushed him toward the door in her ever impulsive fashion, then dropped into her chair by the table. Adrian went slowly, torn by conflicting feelings, not in the least satisfied with himself. As he laid his hand on the knob he looked back. She was sitting like a breathing statue, her head drooped, her hands crossed on her lap.

"Good-bye, and take courage," he said; then hurried out.

For a long time she did not move; then she uttered a deep sigh, and looking at a little traveling clock on the table, sprang suddenly into action.

"Dick won't come. Nothing can make him weaken!" she cried out, and began pacing the floor in feverish anxiety. There was another knock, and almost at a bound she reached the door and opened it.

A man of middle age entered, neatly attired in business clothes, of an exterior so precise and formal that the first glimpse of him acted like a shower bath on her nerves. He came in carefully, shutting the door behind him, and not offering her his hand.

"Mrs. Lorimer," he said—"or, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hatch—you may have forgotten me. I am Mr. Cleave, Mr. Lorimer's lawyer."

"I haven't forgotten you, Mr. Cleave," she responded, in clear, cutting tones. "It's hardly likely—you got him his divorce. Isn't he coming?"

"He is undecided," answered the lawyer, seating himself on the edge of a small upright chair. "I was to have a few preliminary words with you. Of course, madam, you must know that your letter, announcing your intended arrival in New York, was a considerable shock to my client. On my own part, I can assure you that I believed you to be—dead."

"Very sorry to disappoint you," she said, curtly and with a little curl of the lip.

"Mrs.—er—Hatch, I had better be frank with you," went on Mr. Cleave, not in the least susceptible to curls of any sort. "And there is nothing gained by long preamble. My client at first declined, on any terms, to see you or hold speech with you. Your request seemed to him in the highest degree presumptuous. But, after consideration, he agrees to do so, on the absolute conditions that the meeting shall be in my presence and that there shall be no nervous excitement, no recrimination, no scenes."

"I never wanted anything less in my life than a scene with him!" she exclaimed.

"My client was never a man to avoid fulfilling the duty of——"

"Being disagreeable to someone down in the world. Exactly," she interrupted. "There, Mr. Cleave, don't trouble yourself with extolling Dick Lorimer to me. I will tell you frankly that, although you were the instrument of Fate to me, I don't bear you a personal grudge. I know you to be a severe man, but I believe you are a fair one. If ever you've felt a moment's compunction for your share in turning a poor, friendless girl of two-and-twenty adrift on the dark river of men's and women's mercy, listen to me now. I want nothing on earth from you but a moment's belief in me. You have nothing to lose but a little of that hard crust with which the world and the habit of the law have surrounded you. Believe in me, Mr. Cleave; it won't harm you when you stand up to be judged. Believe in me, for, though I was bad and reckless, I always told the truth."

Mr. Cleave pursed his lips together till the line of them described a half-circle; he hemmed several times, and tried not to look her full in the face. At last, speaking to the steam radiator, he said, in a judicial voice:

"Proceed, if you please, Mrs. Hatch."

Marian, who was by now keyed to despairing eagerness, hurried on:

"You remember, on the trial, even you never accused me of not having loved my husband. I loved him—too well; when I found his fancy had wavered away from me, to settle on the person who is now his wife, I was mad with jealousy. I did everything I knew to win him back, but my day was over. My little arts wearied him. If I was coquettish, he was cold as a stone. If I expostulated, he was bored. If I cried and raved, he swore at me and went to the club."

"That was a long time since, dear madam," interposed Mr. Cleave, impersonally, "a long time since."

"Oh, I know, but once is forever to a woman who loves. But hear the rest of it—a plain story from one who has never forgotten a single incident of that time, Mr. Cleave. The day Dick Lorimer brought that woman into our house, and forced me to receive her, I was crazy for revenge. I did the wildest act of folly a woman can commit. That man—my husband's best friend—who had been trying to make love to me for months, and I laughing at him, but, all the same, playing with fire, asked me to punish Dick by going away with him. I was not twenty-three, remember, and still in love with Dick. . . . I felt myself spurned, humiliated, by my husband. . . . I cared for nothing else. . . ."

She did not sob, but stopped for a few moments, holding herself sternly in check, a proceeding that caused Mr. Cleave to survey the radiator with almost friendly regard. Presently she resumed:

"I am putting it in the fewest, boldest words. You know what followed. . . . I agreed to go away with that man. . . . I let him make all the arrangements. . . . I met him at a certain train. . . . You know it all, I say. God knows you made enough of it in those clever speeches before the referee. . . ."

"Well, madam?" said the lawyer, after another pause.

"I want to get you to say, now, that you believe I did all that for the sole purpose of paying Dick back in his own coin. What you tried to show was that I was wicked by nature, and unfit to be guardian of my child. Ah, Mr. Cleave, you were very eloquent!"

"My good lady, I must protest!" began Cleave, forsaking the radiator to gaze at a table leg. He continued slowly: "I acted upon my best knowledge, in the best interests of my client and his child, and the decision of the referee was entirely fair and unbiased."

"Yes, I know; but when I think what other women are, who still hold their heads high and are surrounded

by their families, I feel that no one gave me half a chance. That letter I wrote—that fatal fool of a letter, by which I hoped to touch Dick's heart and shame him to repentance—that sealed my fate! You remember it, Mr. Cleave—you read it aloud in court! Now, look here." She ran across to a trunk, opened it, took out a parcel of letters and held them up to him.

"All these, begging and praying to be forgiven for one single act of madness; swearing that I was living alone, and in bitter grief and penitence. . . . See, Mr. Cleave! . . . Just listen to this one, please!"

Mr. Cleave was startled from his calm.

"Mrs. Lorimer—Mrs. Hatch, I mean—I must decline," he protested.

"Very well, then. Here's another—the same thing—another—all beseeching Dick, for our child's sake, to forgive me and take me back. Every one he returned to me unopened, excepting that first one that you read aloud. Ah! how terrible it sounded in your voice!"

She threw the letters back into the trunk tray, shut the lid, and came back to him, wiping her eyes.

"I regret what you tell me, Mrs. Hatch. It is a new chapter in the case, certainly; very distressing, indeed, but I fail to see what can be gained by reverting to it now," the lawyer said.

"I only wanted to melt your heart a little," Marian cried, "in order to help me to melt Dick's."

Her face, her attitude, the tones of her voice, evinced her sincerity and sorrow. Cleave answered her almost with animation:

"Upon my soul, I believe you loved Lorimer only!"

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Cleave. I did love him, but it took one of those Sphinx women to hold him—one of the kind who know how to repress men, and act with them as cats do with their prey. Like the wife he's got now! While I—you could always see my heart in my face. I loved him,

and I showed it. It wearied him—Oh! had I known better——”

“Time passes, Mrs. Hatch. What, specifically, did you desire me to do for you?” interposed the caller.

“Bring Dick here. Let me ask one single favor of him.”

“H’m! ‘Scenes,’ you know. And my client was so exact on this point. I am afraid I can hardly trust you.”

“Oh, yes, you can—you can! I won’t raise my voice, won’t say one unpleasant thing. Only try me, Mr. Cleave!”

She was so desperately anxious, so beautiful in her pleading, so much the wayward girl of old, Mr. Cleave could not refuse her. He walked, with short, mincing steps, over to the electric bell, and stood with his finger on the button.

“It will be awkward for me if I send for him, and you——”

“No ‘ifs’—I promise,” cried Marian.

Mr. Cleave rang.

“Thank you, dear Mr. Cleave,” she said, softly. “This makes up for lots of harm you’ve done me. You can sleep better after this for thinking there’s one poor little woman the less in the world to cherish you as her enemy.”

“I recognize some of the old Eve in you, Mrs. Lor—er—Hatch,” said the lawyer, grimly smiling. “Yours is certainly not a personality one easily forgets.”

“Nor one that changes,” she said, sighing.

When the bell was answered Mr. Cleave gave directions that a gentleman called Mr. Lorimer, then waiting below in the reception-room of the hotel, should be shown up to No. 1089. In the little time that elapsed before the new arrival the lawyer addressed himself to the examination of a notebook taken from his pocket, on the pages of which were inscribed certain cabalistic hieroglyphics that seemed to exercise his legal mind, but were in reality the very harmless address of a new bootmaker, given to him by a man at his club, and the recipe for a

fish sauce, communicated by a gastronomic friend.

When Mr. Lorimer entered the room and Marian saw again in the full light of day the man who had received the homage of her young heart so many years before, she experienced a sort of revulsion at her own blind infatuation for an object so unworthy. Time and self-indulgence, prosperity and a material habit of looking at things had rubbed off all the fine edges from his once striking manly beauty. The flesh beneath his eyes had a puffy, purple look; the eyes themselves were lifeless, the mouth had settled into hard and pleasure-loving curves. The fulness beneath his chin told the tale of middle life, as did the outline of his formerly athletic figure.

Slain at a glance was Marian’s long-cherished sentiment for the husband of her youth. Although he fixed on her a first glance of some surprise at her abiding grace and freshness, the expression soon settled into one of rancorous resentment at her intrusion into his life.

With the feminine instinct of hospitality that nothing quells, Marian invited him to a chair; but without acknowledgment of her courtesy, he addressed her while still standing near the door.

“Tell me at once why you presumed to commit the impertinence of asking me to call on you.”

Marian, who had unconsciously caught up Adrian’s bunch of lilies, and stood with them in her hand, answered, deliberately:

“Because I have heard that my daughter is to be married.”

II

“You mean that *my* daughter is to be married,” Lorimer said, with cutting emphasis. “How does that concern you?”

“I read in a paper I picked up in San Francisco,” she answered, with a proud, weary look, “some passing allusion to the approaching

marriage of the beautiful Miss Gladys Lorimer, of New York, daughter of the eminent and wealthy financier. Nothing more. Of course, I did my best to find out further particulars. The people I knew were not of a kind to be informed on such points."

"Hardly," said Lorimer, with a sneer.

"I did not even see the bridegroom's name. You think I have no right to know it, or to care. But I do care—awfully! All these long, empty years I've lived on the thought of Gladys. Her childhood and her girlhood have been the playground of my starved fancy. On every one of her birthdays I've bought a little pot of flowers and watered it with my tears. At Christmas I've wandered in the streets, looking through other people's windows trying to catch glimpses of young girls, wondering if she looked like them. When I met those of her age and station out walking or driving I stared at them hungrily. I envied their mothers and their maids. I'd have given a year of my life to dress Gladys for her first ball."

"Is this maudlin stuff what you brought us here to listen to?" asked Lorimer, with a shrug.

Marian showed no resentment. Her face had flushed, her eyes had a far-off, dreamy look.

"Isn't she very young to be married, Richard?" she said, in tenderest accents.

"You forget yourself, Mrs. Hatch!" the man said, ruffling like an angry turkey till the very veins of his throat swelled with resentful vanity.

"So I did, Mr. Lorimer," she answered, lightly. "After all, *I* was married at her age. I remember my joy in my wedding presents was like a child's over new toys. We weren't rich then, and they seemed magnificent. . . . That brings me to asking if you will be so good—so very good—as to let me send your daughter this little token I've bought for her on her marriage?"

She had taken up the parcel re-

cently arrived, and extended it beseechingly.

"On no account. What are you thinking of? Allow her to . . . a present from you! Why, she's no idea you're—Cleave, the woman's mad—stark mad!" blustered Lorimer, backing to get out of her reach.

She dropped the parcel on the table quickly.

"Mr. Cleave knows I am not mad," she said, with spirit, "and you should. If you can't understand the natural impulse of maternity——"

"That you forfeited, once and for all," he interrupted, "by throwing yourself into the arms of that damned 'sympathizer,' who, luckily, is dead, though I fancy you've been consoled."

"Come, come, Mr. Lorimer," said Cleave, warmly, "this won't do! You know it won't do at all!"

"I don't mind him, Mr. Cleave!" cried Marian, passionately. "He knows how much truth is in his insults. He knows what my life's been since I *was* mad—driven so by his cruelty, neglect and the wilful ignoring of every good impulse of my heart. Like my child, I was, when I married, motherless. There was no one to warn me of the fearful risk I ran. If I had known anything of life and men I might have been—safe—to-day. What wonder that I am desperately anxious about Gladys?"

"Don't presume to put yourself in the same category with Miss Lorimer, who, by the way, profits by the example and counsels of a most competent adviser."

For the first time Marian's self-control failed her. She started as if flicked by a whip, and the angry tears rushed to her eyes.

"In the person of your wife?" she said, cuttingly. "Thank you for recalling her to me. As I remember Mrs. Lorimer, she was hardly a model for innocent youth—clever, certainly, at concealing compromising appearances—a little vulgar, a little pious, perfectly satisfied with the punishment allotted in this world to other

sinner, so long as she herself was not found out."

Cleave, being human, smiled vaguely around the eyes at this, the muscles of his mouth remaining quite firm. Lorimer, too furious to notice him, searched vainly for a properly withering reply.

Marian's face had taken on a reckless look, and she hurried on:

"I seem like a ghost coming back and hovering over your two devoted, connubial heads, don't I? How often I used to say I meant to try that hovering and eavesdropping spirit business, if you survived me! Well, I've tried it, and I don't find it as funny as I thought."

"Incorrigible! The old cursed trifling!" exclaimed Lorimer, turning his back. "Cleave, this woman's hopeless! I leave you to deal with her."

Marian, running after him, placed her hand on his arm. There was something so childlike about her as she pleaded with him to forgive her rash speech, to listen to her yet a little while, that any other man than Lorimer would have insensibly yielded a point or two before her magnetism. But he preserved his harsh, unyielding exterior as he grudgingly inquired what she had further to say.

Marian trembled in every limb.

"It is such a little thing to you to grant what I've crossed the continent to ask," she said, with desperately imploring eyes. "Let me see my child—once, only once."

"Listen to that, Cleave!" said Lorimer, contemptuously. "After the years of work we've had to suppress this woman in the child's memory—"

"She remembered me, then?" cried the mother, thrilling with joy.

"At first we had no end of bother with her. She was nervous, hysterical, always calling for you in her sleep, and talking of you to her nurses. But by the judicious management of her present mother all that nonsense has been squashed. My daughter is now a healthy and normal girl. She believes you to be

dead, and, so far as I know, never thinks of you."

The iron entered into Marian's soul at this, and her head drooped forward pitifully.

"Does she know," she asked, faintly, "about—my—disgrace?"

"I fancy nobody has enlightened her," answered Lorimer. "Old Agnes, who was her nurse when you left, has had entire charge of her since, and is still her maid. The woman had my strictest orders to never mention you."

"Agnes!" exclaimed Mrs. Hatch, "old Agnes! She was always old, I think, and dear and forgiving. A kind of moral feather-bed to throw one'sself upon. Then she's had Gladys? Oh, I'm glad! I'm glad! Richard, for God's sake, don't refuse me! I don't ask to meet my darling face to face. Let me only look at her from a distance, feast my eyes on her features, and I'll go back as I came."

"It's too risky," said he, after a moment's thought.

"Dick, look at my life!" she pleaded. "Isn't it enough of a wreck to please even you? Think what you and Cleave did for me. Why, in this town, where I was born and belong to the best, there isn't a decent house I could walk into now—not one! It seems a dream that I once led my set in society here; a party wasn't a go without me. When Mrs. Dick Lorimer left a dance it was over, and the rest followed me out, like sheep, into the dawn, even watched me get into my carriage. Oh! I lived then—"

She raised her arms over her head, then dropped them suddenly. "Richard, by the memory of that time, grant me one look, one little look, at Gladys! It can't hurt her, or you. Remember when you first lifted your baby from my side and kissed her, then me, and thanked me for her. You weren't all hard then—you had a husband's and a father's heart in your bosom, and warm blood in your veins. Bad I may be, but you can't ever forget that hour. Richard, have pity! Think how I've suffered, expiated my

sin! Try to imagine the bitter loneliness of my solitary life since you turned me out. Have mercy on a poor, crushed woman! Let me see my child!"

While Cleave suddenly found his attention claimed by a gang of workmen relaying the asphalt in the street below, Lorimer spoke, in a gentler tone:

"What you ask is manifestly improper. Under no circumstances could you be admitted inside my house."

"Inside or out, I care not!" she went on, seeing her advantage. "Anywhere, so I catch one glimpse of my child; see her before she passes into the new life and away from me forever."

Lorimer walked over to Cleave by the window and conferred with him in whispers, with the result that the lawyer, wonderfully subdued in manner, left his client and came over to sit by the chair into which Marian had fallen, quivering with her own vehemence of passion.

"Mrs. Hatch," he said, with real feeling, "there are delicate questions involved in what you ask. The young gentleman your daughter is to marry will presently be placed in an embarrassing predicament. It will be soon necessary to inform him of the facts of her mother's past."

"He might have known them easily, if he had tried," she said, gloomily. "It was certainly no mystery! The papers were full of it at the time."

"As a matter of fact, he comes from a distant city," Cleave went on, smoothly, "and has chanced to hear nothing at all about the divorce. He, like the rest of the world, believes you to have died long since."

Marian echoed him:

"Died long since! And so I did, God knows!"

"In these cases," pursued the lawyer, "nothing comes of reviving old sorrows and grievances. My client had already deputed me to inform his future son-in-law of the fact that Gladys's mother is living, though unlikely ever to make herself known

to him and his wife. We shall ask him, in his own time and place, to tell his wife the truth. Would you wish to cloud your child's marriage by letting this sad news come to her *now*?"

"No, a thousand times no! You know it, Mr. Cleave!" exclaimed Marian.

"Then there is another circumstance that complicates the situation. The father and the mother of the bridegroom reside at some distance from our city. They are excellent, influential people of large wealth, and are just now allied with Mr. Lorimer in very important business——"

"Dick's business! Then he has them in his net?" cried she, in irrepressible satire.

Mr. Cleave went on, patiently:

"Those worthy people are old-fashioned, narrow and conservative to eccentricity. Did they know of this matter, they would be quite capable of violent public opposition to the match, which would thus stir up around an innocent young girl a noisome scandal in the newspapers, and bring you small satisfaction in return."

"No, no, not that—never that!" she said.

"Tell her all, Cleave," said Lorimer, joining them. "She'll understand me better then. Tell her that the son is dependent on his parents for fortune, and that if she's lunatic enough to show up now, she'll not only disgrace her child, but impoverish her. Besides, those people will, like as not, whip their money out of a venture that means millions to my family. Why, curse her, she'd ruin all of us!"

"Now I fully understand you," she said, facing him contemptuously, then turning quickly away. "That's enough, Mr. Cleave—I'm conquered. I'll struggle no more. But before you go, tell me, please—not if my girl's lover is rich or well-placed—and I don't care a rap about his frumpy old parents and their millions—tell me if my child's husband will be good and true—patient with her faults, forbear-

ing with her follies—if, in short, he is a gentleman.”

“Miss Lorimer’s choice is all that her friends could wish,” the lawyer answered. “But, Mrs. Hatch, you did not let me finish what I began to say under instruction from my client. If he were quite assured that you would in no way betray your identity, he might consent to let you see Miss Lorimer at a distance. There would be the condition that you go away from town directly afterward, of course.”

“See her! Oh, my God!” cried Marian. “Where? How?”

“Mrs. and Miss Lorimer are in the habit of driving in the Park every fine afternoon about four. If you will go to-morrow to a spot that will be indicated by my client, you may be able to see the young lady pass in her carriage, without fear of her detecting you.”

“But how shall I know my child?” she asked, anxiously.

“Mr. Lorimer will send old Agnes to join you, and point her out to you. You will this evening receive a note from me containing full particulars; but there must be this clear understanding, that this is all you will ever ask of us.”

“I promise—anything!” she cried, joyously. “Just now I feel only seventeen myself. Calling for me in her sleep! My own—my treasure! Old Agnes coming for me! Dear old thing! She always loved me. Harm Gladys by thought or deed for my selfish pleasure? Oh, Mr. Cleave, I can’t speak to Richard Lorimer! I don’t want to lose the heavenly warmth his promise has put into my heart; but tell him, please, that I’ll do all he asks.”

Over her April face again swept a torrent of tenderness, making it so young, so radiant, that the two men who had come there to scorn her went out together in half-shamed silence.

Lorimer, indeed, had vaguely thought to offer Marian some pecuniary help, but on looking about him decided that her finances must be in a

satisfactory condition, since she presented such a good front to the world.

III

THE Park presented a pretty and unwonted spectacle all that long bright day of May. For a wonder, no boreal hint in the air brought bronchitis and pneumonia into the train of the various May queens who assumed their brief sovereignty in spots yielded by authority for the occasion. A soft wind rustled the young leaves of the trees and scattered the petals of forward blossoms on the velvet turf. Every boskage showed masses of tender color, but for once the flowers were outdone by their human rivals.

Since before noon May parties of children from the tenement districts all over town had been streaming out of trolley cars and overflowing into the various approaches of the Park. Numbers of them wore caps of red, white and blue and carried American flags, walking in prim processions, led by drum and fife, until they reached the bits of springy turf surrendered to them for the day. Then they relaxed into a very orgy of Spring happiness, running, tumbling, sliding, shouting, rolling and turning cart-wheels on the grass. Some of the bands were made up of children dressed in gala costumes of old-world fashion. Their faces revealed types of every nationality of Europe, the Slav predominating, an odd sight altogether under the forest of American liberty-caps. Other little urchins and damsels were in pathetically tattered finery, footing it and scampering with the best.

In a lovely nook near one of the main driveways stood a little summer-house, whose trellised sides and steep-pointed roof were fairly dripping with the purple bloom of wistaria. A shaded path in front divided it from the road, and on one side, in an intensely verdant meadow, stood a May-pole, the many-colored streamers of which were held by a party of children of the poorest class; circling

round the dancers, instructing them in the art of weaving the ribbons about the pole, and generally policing the crowd, passed and repassed a half-dozen young men and girls, the active members of a club for benevolent work in this stratum of society. For those left over from the dance were organized games and distractions of every kind that the active brains of the managers could invent. One poor little fellow, in shoes a world too big for him, having gained possession of a painted balloon, had retired with it, in jealous rapture, to the shelter of a clump of *pyrus japonica* and was giving the wonder rein above his head, following its upward course with fascinated gaze.

"Take care, Johnny-boy!" exclaimed one of the managers, a charming young woman in thin muslin, with a large picture-hat wreathed with nodding plumes, who observed him as she was darting by. "Hold very fast to your string. If it gets away from you, you're gone!"

But to Johnny-boy the present enterprise embodied all the sky-soaring romance of his six years of Eastside existence in his mother's flat. His brown eyes grew bigger as his string was told out from his hot little dirty hand; smiles widened his small thin face; he felt akin to a bird winging its way into the azure.

A lady emerged at this moment from the screen of verdure dividing the playground from the roadway, and looked about anxiously to identify the spot. When she saw the summer-house and one or two other landmarks of which she was in search her face grew brilliant with satisfaction; then as quickly tears came into her eyes. Johnny-boy, seeing this grand and pretty lady in tears, looked at her in astonishment. His glance aside was unfortunate, since his treasured balloon took immediate occasion to elude his grasp and speed away higher, driven by the breeze. His look of despair, seen only by the newcomer, caused her to drop on her knees beside him and put an arm around his shoulder.

"Don't cry, little man," she said, soothingly.

"It wuz my blune!" wailed Johnny, "the first I ever had!"

"But you can get another. My balloon went up long ago, and I couldn't," she said, slipping into his hand a silver piece that brought joy to his face.

"Say, this'll buy two blunes, an' I'll bring you one, lady," he observed, clattering off in pursuit of a vender.

The lady smiled, and her smile was reflected in the eyes of the pretty girl with the picture-hat, whom the sound of Johnny-boy's wailing had brought back to the spot.

"Thank you for relieving our little chap's trouble so promptly," said Miss Lina Thurston, secretary of the Little Wings Club to the stranger, whom she at once recognized as of her own station. "I have done nothing for hours, it seems to me, but redress wrongs and soothe grievances. It's a little world in miniature, this May party of ours."

"You represent the Little Wings Club?"

"Yes, I'm its unworthy secretary. To-day we flatter ourselves we are a distinct success. No little boy has as yet broken or sprained any part of his anatomy, there have been only three fights, and no little girl has insisted on going home."

"From what do you derive your name, if I may ask?"

"A fancy of one of our vice-presidents, Miss Gladys Lorimer——"

"Ah!" said the strange lady, with a sudden indrawing of the breath.

"I beg your pardon; are you ill?" asked Miss Thurston, kindly. "Wouldn't you like to go and sit a while in that little summerhouse, and look on at our fun?"

"It's nothing but the first heat of Summer. You were going on to tell me more about your club and its vice-president."

"She selected for our motto the lines:

Little things on little wings
Bear little souls to heaven.

Rather nice, isn't it? You know our association is called a fashionable fad, but——"

"And Miss Lorimer is fond of charitable work? Is she strong enough to do it—does she run no risks in the quarters of the town where these children live?"

"You know her, then?" began Lina, when a small girl coming toward her engaged her attention.

"Miss Thurston, Tommy's pinched me, and took away my orange."

"Coming, Katy! Duty calls, so I must run away. If you stop awhile you'll see them crown the queen," she added, with a friendly nod of adieu.

Marian, left again alone, looked about her nervously.

"It is almost time for Agnes," she thought, trying to still her beating heart by pressing her gloved hand over it.

A young man, very pleasant of face and near-sighted, came out of a thicket of shrubbery and stopped before her, taking off his hat.

"I beg pardon, but are you one of the committee?" he said, in rather a helpless tone.

"No; but can I be of use?" answered Mrs. Hatch.

"Thanks, ever so much. There's a little Roumanian girl over there sitting glued to the ground, howling dreadfully, and won't tell what's the matter. What on earth shall I do with her?"

Miss Thurston, executing one of her swallow dips about the crowd, here returned to the relief.

"Stay by her, Fred, and comfort her. It's your duty as first vice-president," she exclaimed, mischievously.

"Oh, I say," answered Fred, visibly exhilarated by her presence. "I can do it fast enough if you keep me company."

"I can't, possibly," said she; "I'm 'it' in kiss-in-the-ring. Perhaps you'll change places with me, though."

"No, thanks," he answered, returning manfully to his post. An organ-grinder just then appearing with a monkey created the usual diversion,

and in the general sortie of the forces to surround him, Marian was again left to her own devices.

"I am running too great a risk," she thought, ruefully. "If they knew what I am I'd be the hawk in the dovecote. But oh, what it means to me to hear my darling's name spoken familiarly among them!" She looked at her watch. "Three minutes past the hour, and Agnes hasn't come! Oh, if she should fail me!"

The next turn in her walk to and fro revealed hurrying toward her through the crowd a plain, thick-set old woman with a shrewd, benevolent face and the manner of a privileged upper servant who is also confidante of the family. Marian schooled herself to resist the desperate impulse to throw both arms around her, and contented herself with a long and fervent kiss.

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes, Agnes!" she repeated, yearningly. "How long since I've seen your dear old face! I'd like to let all the world know what a duck you are!"

"My poor dear, my poor dear, quiet yourself. Come in the summerhouse and sit down. There'll be an officer stepping up by-and-by to see what ails the pair of us. There! there! Let me look at ye, my beauty. Not much changed—for the better, if anything—in looks."

"Agnes, is she coming?" demanded Marian, as soon as they were in the seclusion of the green-walled kiosk.

"By-and-by, Mrs. Lorimer, my dear. Ye have a wild look in your eyes; ye must control yourself."

"There, I'm controlled," said Marian, choking down her emotion. "I feel as if I could throw myself like a tired child into your arms, and cry my heart out. It's been so long, Agnes! I've been so lonesome!"

"My lamb, I've never forgot ye. But that I had your child to look after, I'd have pulled up stakes and followed ye to California."

"She needed you more than I did. I'm thankful she had you," cried Marian, squeezing the time-hardened hand under the neat brown glove. "But begin, and don't stop. Tell me

everything about her from the time I left her until now."

"No, my dear, I can't," said Agnes, mournfully. "He wouldn't let me come to-day without a solemn promise I wouldn't talk about the child. I wasn't so much as to answer a question about her."

"Cruel! cruel!" cried Marian. "This is more than I deserve."

"Don't give up, dear. Think! ye're going to see her in a minute! That'll comfort ye a little, won't it? While we're waiting tell me about yerself. Ye've found friends?"

"None of my own sort," she said, sadly.

"Ye haven't wanted for anything?"

"You remember my old knack at making lampshades and painting fans? Well, I started a little business, in time opened a place of my own; my ideas 'took,' and I've prospered fairly well. I had laid up quite a little capital, and the thing was growing in my hands. Two weeks ago, when I read about Gladys going to be married, the terrible longing to see her overcame me. I sold out my business to my forewoman, took all I had, bought some good clothes and started East."

"Heedless as ever, bless her heart!" said Agnes, surveying her companion's costume and person admiringly. "Always had the touch with everything she put on! The present madam isn't a patch on ye for style. But after ye've seen her, your child—mum's the word, but sure I can say that—what are ye going to do? How in the world, poor bird, are ye going to live?"

"God knows!" Marian answered, drearily.

"Where?" pursued the old woman, anxiously.

Marian did not speak, but made a vague gesture outward with her hands.

"I'm afraid ye've done another mad thing, my dear, to give up a good support. The world isn't ever in a hurry to help women to help themselves."

"When was I ever prudent?" cried Mrs. Hatch. "Didn't money always slip through my fingers like water

through a sieve? But I don't care for anything now except what I came here for. Let me see my child just once, and I'll begin life all over again."

Agnes stroked her hand.

"Poor child! poor child!"

A flush of pleasure came into Marian's cheek.

"It is so sweet, so precious, to be pitied by a true heart," she said, gratefully. "At this moment I feel happier than in years."

The two sat silent for a little while, old Agnes hampered by the injunctions laid upon her, Marian in a dream of the past evoked by her companion's voice and touch. She was aroused from it by a little cry from Agnes.

"There! there! She's coming. Look, dear, that's Mrs. Lorimer's victoria."

Entirely sheltered from observation as she was, Marian could feast her eyes to her heart's content on the vision pointed out to her. On the rear seat of the approaching carriage, with its shining Kentucky cobs, two trim men on the box and the Lorimer crest in silver everywhere, sat an older woman, on whom the mother's gaze wasted no time, and a fair, youthful creature, who absorbed her attention utterly. Tears rose to Marian's eyes and for a moment obscured her treasure. Dashing them away impatiently, she looked again, and thanked God when a block in the line of vehicles ahead kept the Lorimer victoria longer in her sight.

"That Gladys! That my nestling, whom I left asleep in her crib . . . so tall, so beautiful! . . . Ah, God! Agnes! She doesn't speak to the Sphinx woman any more than is needful. They aren't intimate, as mother and daughter should be. Gladys is absorbed on her own account. . . . Oh! I'm like a beggar staring at a feast. I envy that woman; envy her horribly. It might have been my victoria. How I should have gloried to be seen abroad with my angel! . . ."

"She's a fine, well-grown guyrl, and a perfect lady, if I do say it," answered Agnes, complacently.

"These tears again! They must go. I must see her every second of the time allowed me!" exclaimed Mrs. Hatch, desperately shaking her head to rid herself of the fresh gathered mists before her vision. "Agnes, they're going! . . . Oh, God! she must not leave me unsatisfied. Agnes, the time's too short for the mother that gave her birth."

"They're only going to stop a little way ahead, and the child will get out to join her friends," said Agnes, passing a stout arm around the agonized creature. Her own old eyes could see nothing for their quick response to the mother's yearning.

While Marian sat in the arbor, paying in that brief space of time the bitter price of her misdoing as she had not done in all the years of her exile, Mrs. Lorimer's voice was uplifted in exhortation to Marian's child:

"Gladys, I have really no patience with this club business of yours! I hesitate greatly to leave you among the rabble of children from the East-side. You'll get some disease, I'm certain, and this is no time for you to make experiments with your health."

"I promised them to come, mamma," answered the girl, gently; "but, of course, if you don't wish it I won't stop."

"I should think your subscription was enough, and I would give something over. However, since I see Miss Thurston and Dolly Gay and Mrs. Brenton are there, I suppose you may venture for a little while. Only until I go around the drive, remember!"

The victoria had halted, and Gladys, under the superintendence of a natty groom, had set one slender foot on the asphalt. At sight of her, the children, evident adorers of their young vice-president, broke bounds and swarmed down to the driveway, followed by the young ladies who had them in charge. There was no holding back. Gladys was surrounded, captured, coaxed to play wolf. A deafening clamor filled the air. All the passers-by smiled indulgently, for this was the children's day in Central Park.

As her conquerors carried the young girl off to the green slope from which their Maypole soared aloft, and Mrs. Lorimer, with many jingling chains, drove reluctantly away, Marian Hatch made a movement to run out of her hiding place, but was arrested by the reproving glance of her comrade.

"Mrs. Lorimer, my dear—for, God save us, I can't be calling ye by the name ye give yerself—think what ye're about."

"You're right, Agnes," she said, falling back on the bench. "Oh, she is coming back this way."

"Keep quiet, ma'am, and there'll be something to reward ye. I wasn't to mention names, but I'll leave ye to guess who it is my young lady has spied walking down that path that crosses below us. Who is it she'd run to meet like that, if not her future husband, bless her soul!"

Agnes, brimming with pride and importance, indicated by a gesture the direction in which she desired Marian to look, and the latter, with eagerness and jealousy combined, turned to behold—Jack Adrian!

Jack Adrian, to whom her child fluttered like a homing pigeon—Jack Adrian, between whom and herself she had voluntarily opened the gulf of separation!

How could she have dreamed that this comrade of her later days, this man whose honest belief in her had been like a spring in the desert of her life, this fond lover, who had yet made her feel the bitter sense of her unfitness to be spoken to about his betrothed, was the master of Gladys's destiny?

As she stood staring at the two with startled eyes, they remained for a moment so near her on the path below she could not but hear their talk, simple in phrasing, but freighted with the intonation of happy lovers.

"I was so afraid—" Gladys began.

"Afraid of what?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

"Oh, that I shouldn't be let stop—and then that you wouldn't get here," she said, blushing under his gaze.

"I only came to say I couldn't come," he answered, laughing, "and to get this look at you to carry me on till evening."

"Foolish boy! All that long way up-town for me?"

"No, for the club, if you like that better."

"Come, then, you must show yourself for a minute. Too bad! There's mamma in the victoria, coming back."

"Soon there'll be no mamma to come between us," he said, smiling. "I'll chaperon you, and you'll chaperon Dolly and Lina, you see."

"That will be such fun! But really, Jack, I'm ashamed of speaking so about Mrs. Lorimer. She has done her best for me, I'm sure."

"But her best is oppressive, as we know."

"If she were my own, my very own mother, I shouldn't feel so," the girl said, with a sigh. They had started to walk back to rejoin the little group around the Maypole, and, in passing, Gladys's voice came to her mother's ear so distinctly that the listening woman involuntarily stretched out her arms in answer.

But the voices passed, receded, and directly afterward she saw Mrs. Lorimer drive up, reclaim her companion, greet Adrian with effusive graciousness as he put Gladys into her place, and sit waving exaggerated farewells to the rest of the club committee assembled on the knoll above. Whatever might be the measure of regard cherished by Gladys's friends for her stepmother, they omitted none of the forms of respectful salutation in her direction. The stir of rebellion against this condition of affairs made Marian sick and cold. The horrible difference between the lots of the two women—one of whom had sinned and accepted the consequence, the other, having sinned equally, yet successfully hidden her secret—smote her poignantly. For a moment her sense of the injustice of Fate obscured even her feeling for her child.

But when the footman sprang up

beside the coachman, and the victoria with the Lorimer crest and liveries was under way; while Jack Adrian stood, hat in hand, smiling at Gladys, who looked back at him with the innocent, happy expression of a young child that has gained its heart's desire—then a realization of what she was losing came to Marian.

"My child! my child! my child!" was all she could say. But the look in her face alarmed Agnes more than anything that had gone before. It was plain that the poor woman was tried beyond endurance and hardly responsible for anything she might do. She suddenly ran out of the summer-house, Agnes clutching her and pleading with her to remain until under self-control.

"Agnes, you don't understand," she exclaimed. "It's the last time I shall see her! I have looked my last upon my child! Would you not pity any mother who was turning away from her child's grave?"

The nurse, seeing her thus half-distraught, clasped her hands, praying for the interposition of Christ and Mary to save the poor soul from some desperate act. And just then, straight along the path into which Marian had strayed, came Adrian, hurrying back to his day's work, in which the meeting with Gladys had been a sunny episode.

As Mrs. Hatch beheld him the full meaning of their relative positions flashed through her mind, arousing the desire to shelter Gladys at all hazards by concealing their relationship.

"I have been mad; now I am sane," she said, marshaling her nerve forces to guide her in the inevitable meeting. Adrian, when he saw Mrs. Hatch standing there before him, holding out her hand as she would have done at any time during their recent friendly companionship, was not glad of the encounter. She came too suddenly into the arena of thoughts fully filled with his love and eager anticipations of soon having Gladys to himself. Since they had parted, the day before, he had re-

verted to her more than once, with mingled feelings. If, when they had arrived together in New York, anyone authorized to do so had asked him who, critically speaking, was the most fascinating woman he had ever met, he would have answered, Mrs. Hatch. She had piqued, entertained, charmed him during the days of their enforced companionship on the Pullman car. But there had been no disloyalty to Gladys in that admiration. He had always kept this dear little guileless love of his in a walled garden in his thoughts.

Marian's sad story, her impulsive confidence, the glimpse she had given him of her hapless life, had, as we have seen, excited his loyal sympathy. But after he had gone out of her impelling presence, the natural revulsion had come. He wanted no more of a woman whose history was inscribed upon such a scroll. At present, all his ideas were tinged with rose color, his hopes and manly ambitions fixed on home and hearthside, wife and children, the sanctity of the marriage tie. He wanted nothing in common with one who had, whatever her temptation, in her own case deliberately dragged in the dust the fair fabric of marital honor. The more he reflected on such as Gladys, the more repellent seemed such as Mrs. Hatch. If ever he should meet the poor woman again, he would not stay his hand from doing her a service; but just now he did not want her in Gladys's kingdom—emphatically not!

He lifted his hat, and spoke to her pleasantly, forcing himself to pause for a moment and express the hope that she was feeling better than yesterday and enjoying the open air, adding his wish that she might have had good news.

"Yes, I have had good news—of a sort," she said, smiling, under her veil, so that he felt quite relieved regarding her.

"My best congratulations," he said, hurriedly; "and you won't mind my leaving you in rather a hasty fashion? The truth is, I have no right to be here now. A business appointment

of some importance awaits me at my office."

"Don't let me keep you. Good-bye," she said, brightly, and again their hands met and parted.

For days Marian had been feeding on his comradeship. Their exchange of ideas had been intimate and continued. She had recognized her power over him, and rejoiced in it in true womanly fashion. Now that power had vanished utterly. She herself had destroyed it. Her quick intuition read in his mind relief to be rid of her.

And worst of all, he was to be the husband of her child. But she had not betrayed herself! Thank heaven for that!

Old Agnes, coming up to her, did not hide her surprise at what she had witnessed.

"My dear, I am that taken aback—who'd have thought ye knew my young lady's sweetheart!" she said, wonder puckering her face.

"I know him, but he does not suppose that I ever laid eyes on Gladys," Marian hastened to explain.

"And ye're satisfied with her choice? He's rich and a grand family, too, they say, and a high education, and a bonny lad to look at, don't ye think?"

"Yes, Agnes. I think so. Gladys is luckier than ever her mother was, for he is all you have said, and . . . good. He'll never let harm come near her."

"Mrs. Lorimer, my dear, ye are getting white. Come back into the summerhouse and sit down and use my salts."

"Don't call me that! Call me Mrs. Hatch. It's all I've a right to. Oh, Agnes, my heart is breaking!"

"That's right, cry it out, my dearie. I'm only allowed an hour with ye, but I do hate to go and leave ye. There's a bit of time yet."

"Agnes, don't forsake me! I feel as if I were on a wreck, and you in the last lifeboat, leaving it without me."

"My lamb! my poor, sorrowing lamb!" muttered the old woman, drying her eyes.

Marian seized her arm and said fiercely in her ear:

"Agnes, if I die for it, I must see her nearer."

"What can I do, dearie? Ye told the lawyer if ye saw her once 'twould do ye."

"What do lawyers know about a mother's heart?" she cried. "I said so, and I meant it; but this glimpse of her has aroused within me a passion of longing to be close to her, to speak to her, no matter how or where. Just think of all the years I missed—all those baby years of her precious life! I can't get them back. No matter what I do, I can't get them back. It always drove me crazy when I sat working—the thought of what I was missing! I love children with their little nestling hands and trustful touches, . . . and I left my own to strangers! Agnes, you know what I must be feeling. She's mine, mine! spite of all, she's mine! God gave her to me. We oughtn't to be separated, any more than flesh from blood. Oh! I could fight like a tigress to hold her one moment in my arms."

While she paused, drawing long breaths of pain, the children away over by the Maypole began to sing.

"Listen to them. They do that to mock me, Agnes," she exclaimed.

"There, there," began Agnes, patting her hand soothingly; and insensibly Marian's heart opened to the comfort of her touch. When she could speak more coherently she faced the old nurse with imploring eyes.

"Help me, Agnes. If you want to die happy think of some way in which I can get near my child—touch her dress, even. When she goes to her husband my last chance will be gone. He won't give *me* an opportunity to meet *her*, even though he doesn't know my claim on her. You are my one hope. Think, invent some way to get me inside that house."

Agnes sat up, alarmed.

"Inside that house, dearie? It's not to be thought of."

"I want to see her amid her bridal preparations, to carry away some little pictures of her innocent maidenhood,

to photograph her on my memory before she becomes a wife and mother, when I shall never dare intrude on her again. Oh, Agnes! it's as if I stood stretching out my hands to you to keep me from falling into a pit."

"How can I, child? It's as much as my place is worth; but I don't mind that. When she goes the light of that house is snuffed out, sure."

"Couldn't I come there carrying something that's expected for the wedding?" cried Marian, her fancy leaping over all dangers and difficulties.

"Ye were always such a one for ideas, an' no fear in your body," said the nurse, irresolute, sorely tempted, yet following Marian's lead, as had always everyone who came within the sphere of her influence.

"Think, Agnes; think!"

"There's the wedding gown to come home to-morrow from Madame Collette's. There's nothing to prevent me fetching it away in a cab. The madame knows me well, and that I've waited on my young lady there at all her fittings. Then, if I had ye in the cab—but oh, no, child! what am I dreamin' of!"

"Who's afraid, Agnes?" exclaimed her fellow-conspirator, joyfully. "It strikes me that's a perfectly feasible idea. I wait in the cab at Collette's till you come out with the box; we drive to Mr. Lorimer's house; you go in at the basement door, while I present myself boldly at the front door, with the box, as a woman from the dressmaker. What could be plainer sailing? You wash your hands of me, and leave me to do the rest."

"No, no, dearie; it won't do," declared Agnes, in a discouraged tone. "The risk's too great."

"There are none of my old servants there except yourself?"

"No, ma'am, not one. The master took good care of that. There ain't one of these we have now ever heard of the first Mrs. Lorimer. But if ye met *him* or *her*! Just think of it!"

"Agnes, I take the risk, I tell you," exclaimed Marian, her voice sharp with eagerness.

There was another long pause, filled

in by the sound of the children's singing.

"Well, Agnes?" Marian said at last.

"I can't, I tell ye. I don't *dare*!" said the woman, stubbornly.

Marian drew back with a quick, despairing gesture. "Then I'll end my bother some other way," she said, in a sombre whisper.

"My dear, my dear, whatever are ye hinting at?" cried the alarmed nurse.

"It would really be the best way," answered Mrs. Hatch, gaining composure as she went on. "Often and often I've thought of it, but I wanted to live till I'd seen her. Now that I've seen her, for God's sake tell me what you think I've got to hang on for? Listen, Agnes. I've been conscious lately, more than once, of a pain like an iron band across my heart. I saw a doctor in San Francisco, and he tried to dress his verdict in soothing words, but I know what's here." She held her hand against her side. "A sudden joy, a sudden sorrow, . . . and I may go. No pain particularly, I believe, so it's worth waiting for. But life's been so hard on me, Agnes, so unusually inclined to pull me up by the checkrein at every turn that, a little time ago I formed the habit of carrying around with me something of which it would be convenient and simple for me to be supposed to have taken an overdose, . . . after making arrangements for a decent ending and a paragraph in the newspapers that will not compromise anybody."

"Mrs. Lorimer, ye'd never mean it!"

"Yes, Agnes; and what is more, I'll do it now if you refuse me the last desperate chance I have to see my child again. You know I generally keep my word."

"Oh! ye poor thing, don't ye see my heart's bleeding for ye?" cried Agnes. "It ain't threats, however dreadful, as would drive me against my duty. It's pity for ye that's choking me. I just feel, if ye went away and never saw her more, that I

couldn't sleep o' nights. If I could only be sure of ye controlling yourself—"

"Try me," said Marian.

"Ye know 'twould be awful if he found us out. That wouldn't move ye a mite, but if 'twas known on the poor child—"

"Don't you feel that she's what would keep me acting my part to the bitter end?" pleaded the mother.

"I never was so put about in all my born days—never, never!" cried Agnes.

A gleam of old-time mirth flashed into Marian's eyes—always it had been Agnes's habit to sound a last protest in these words before yielding to demands on her in the nursery.

"The saints forgive me if I'm sinnin' to save a poor mother's heart from breakin'!" added the old woman, tears raining down her cheeks.

Marian's face became radiant. In the reaction from despair to respite, her nature, all extremes, sprang up the gamut of hope as though she had never known a rebuff of fate. Youth came back to her starry eyes, bloomed on her cheeks, laughed on her vivid lips. As the nurse, almost terrified by the sudden change, looked at her, beseeching her to go no further, Mrs. Hatch sprang to her feet and clapped her hands in joy.

At that moment a little band of children, shut out by numbers from the Maypole ring on the slope above, and including Johnny-boy, came scampering down to find a level place for a dance on their own account. Wild with hysterical delight, Marian darted out to direct their revels, and finally, amid their screams of pleasure, joined hands in their circle, dancing gaily and gracefully till they were out of breath.

IV

JACK ADRIAN sat in the morning-room of his future father-in-law's house, in close conversation with that astute gentleman, who, for purposes of his own, had preferred to give their talk an air of intimacy and domesticity

by selecting for it this familiar place rather than the formal precincts of the library. Here, during their engagement, the lovers had been wont to retreat from fear of interruption below stairs; here breathed a thousand softening voices of their past. But in spite of Mr. Lorimer's plans, the young man's face wore no mild or placable expression. His brow was knit, his head was bowed on his hand, he bore every appearance of one who has just received an appreciable shock. Lorimer, on his side, was visibly nervous and full of an anxiety he masked as best he might. He sat in an armchair, twisting a papercutter made of carved ivory, until it snapped and was tossed away impatiently.

The room was one of those luxuriously fitted quarters of a modern establishment, where, at odd moments, the family is wont to rendezvous and the ladies sit note-writing, gossiping and toying with Penelope webs of needlework. A deep bay window in the front, through whose liberal panes were revealed glimpses of the Park across the Avenue, was so screened and latticed with growing vines and big-leafed plants as to form a bowery retreat.

Couches and fauteuils of old rose velvet, cushioned abundantly, were arranged to hold their sitters prisoner, since at the elbows stood little tables with electric reading lamps, laden with the newest books and periodicals.

A large table in the centre bore writing implements of silver, candlesticks, papercases, bookracks and framed photographs without end, with tall silver and crystal vases containing red roses and white lilac. Low bookcases ran around walls hung with greenish brocaded stuff and adorned with watercolors and choice etchings and engravings.

To Jack the whole of the large, bright, joyous-looking room was so eloquent of his ladylove he could not bear now to look around him, carrying the new thoughts of her recently imparted to his mind. The

voice of Mr. Lorimer grated on him as it had never done before, when after a brief silence he again began to speak:

"And there, my dear Jack, is my version of the story Cleave broached to you last night; an unpleasant one, I grant, for a man to hear on the eve of his marriage, but—" he shrugged elaborately—"what would you have? Everybody nowadays has some sort of a shilling shocker in his family. Suppose the closet doors of most people we know were to suddenly spring open and the hidden skeletons pop out! By Jove, we'd have a grisly time of it! Imagine them meeting on common ground for a witches' Sabbath! The unmentionable wife or sister or daughter joining hands with the son or husband or brother who's forty fathom deep with an ugly scandal tied to his neck like a stone to a drowned dog! Come, cheer up, old chap! This'll never make any difference to you. The woman's bound to keep dark. She hasn't a ghost of a show among people who used to know her. Besides, she's been mum so long there's nothing to fear from her now."

"Not while Gladys remained with you, perhaps; but the change of estate may be a temptation. However, that's not the only thing. It's that I can't bear to associate the thought of such a loathsome thing with Gladys—with my wife."

"There spoke the son of your Puritan forebears," said Lorimer, with a short laugh. "It won't do—wearing that buff jerkin in a society like ours. Put it off, my lad—put it off! But this much I can assure you—the child you're marrying inherits little from her mother. She is gentle, loving, well-balanced, self-controlled, as straight as a string and as clean as a whistle. If it had been my luck to get one of that kind in my first venture, I'd not have had this cursed story to tell you now."

"Mr. Lorimer—pardon me," said Adrian, in his intense fashion; "did you give that unfortunate woman the benefit of every doubt?"

"Didn't I tell you I have her letter

owning up to the whole thing?" exclaimed Lorimer, irritably. "'What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander' was the intent of her lady-like experiment."

"I know. Mr. Cleave gave me a copy of it to read," said Adrian, flinching. "But it struck me as the wail of one hardly responsible for her actions—half-crazed by jealousy."

"Come, come, Adrian, you are a man of the world. You must see if we judged women by our standard, domestic life would go to smash utterly. Her case was fairly tried by the best talent in the land, and went against her from the first. The reading of that letter before the referee made tatters of her reputation. She seemed to be dazed, offered almost no defense, slunk away into hiding, and has stayed there till now. No, Jack, no weakening to her. My motto is, if a woman once does wrong, believe the worst of her, and throw her overboard. However, I've got the law with me, and on that I stand."

"It is all abhorrent to me," answered Adrian, gloomily. "I think, if you please, we will never dig up this matter again."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Lorimer, with a look of relief. "I am glad to have done with it. Let us have a brandy to take the taste of the resurrection business out of our mouths."

He gave an order to a servant who appeared in answer to his ring, meanwhile watching Adrian narrowly and with evident nervousness. After he had partaken, alone, of a liberal portion of the contents of a small carafe, his spirits seemed to rebound.

"I'm doubly glad, my dear boy," he said, "that you agree with Cleave and me this most regrettable matter should not be mentioned to your excellent father and mother."

"I can imagine nothing more unfortunate than to do so. If know they must, let it be later on. Now, I conceive my duty to shelter Gladys to be higher than that of letting them know the truth."

"Nobly said!" exclaimed Lorimer, his eyes flashing satisfaction.

"I hardly think you could realize the consequences were I to speak now."

Lorimer coughed. In his heart he felt that he realized them thoroughly. "Old school Blue Lights, eh?" he said, attempting jocularly. "They might, in plain words, be inclined to kick against the match."

"They would certainly oppose it, and withdraw their countenance," said Adrian, walking to and fro. "For myself, I'd care not a whit if they didn't give the money they have promised us to begin upon. I could trust to my own efforts to maintain her properly."

"Oh, my dear man, that's understood," protested Lorimer, looking white about the gills. "Of course, I don't let her go to you penniless, . . . although Cleave has explained that, just now, my affairs are rather peculiarly tied up."

"Yes. The money question is the last my father would consider, under ordinary circumstances. But I can't hide from you what I know would follow any such announcement to him as that I have just been so unfortunate as to have to hear. It is not, therefore, very nice for me to go into marriage conscious of deceiving him. However, as I said, I consider that my first duty is to Gladys, poor child; and on that I stand or fall."

"Good, Jack! splendid!" exclaimed Lorimer, effusively. "In my daughter's name, I thank you. Cleave says you will, in your own good time, inform your wife that her mother is still living."

"I accept the charge," said Adrian, gravely. "I hope the knowledge will never come to Gladys through anyone less considerate of her feelings. Mr. Lorimer, one last question: Has that unhappy woman led a correct life since she left her child?"

"She says so," answered Lorimer, shrugging. "But I mean to be sure."

At this point a servant entered, and, halting at Lorimer's elbow, announced, automatically:

"Mr. Jones."

"Ha! the very man! Show him up," said the master of the house, whose florid skin had now regained its normal ruddiness.

Adrian, more shaken by their talk than he cared to let Lorimer see, walked over to the window, within earshot, however, of the dialogue that ensued between Lorimer and the peculiarly offensive and underbred personage now added to their number.

"Ha, Jones! You needn't mind Mr. Adrian. He is up to the whole affair, of course. What have you to report?" asked Lorimer, harshly.

"Did my best, sir," came in the little man's mincing tones, keyed according to his notion of high society. "Put some of my prettiest work into the job. But so far, I regret to say, with no satisfactory result. Was unable to find out anything but what seemed on the straight."

"Well, the details," demanded Lorimer.

"Engaged her room at the hotel for a week from the date of arrival; must have funds, or couldn't stand the cost. No callers, no letters or telegrams, no drinks or cigarettes. Was out all yesterday, took a hansom to Central Park, dismissed it at entrance, returned afoot, ordered no dinner, spent evening in room, reading. My orders went no further, sir, I think."

"No; and they stop here," said Lorimer.

"I hope you are satisfied with my good intentions, Mr. Lorimer. My work for you on other jobs of this kind has been more successful."

"That will do. Send your bill to the office. My cashier will settle it. Good-day."

The detective backed supinely to the door.

"And if there's any other little thing in this line you might want—" he began, but Lorimer had turned his back.

"Or you, Mr. Adrian," ventured Jones, offering Jack his card.

Adrian immediately turned and walked away, and the unappreciated genius went, crab-like, into obscurity.

"That woman's devilish deep!" flashed through Lorimer's mind. "Where did she get the cash for all this turnout?"

But his lips forced a smile as he faced Adrian.

"Not a pleasant part of it, I own."

"If this is your method of gaining information about her, I should prefer to have no news," said Adrian, hotly; and Lorimer's red face grew redder still.

"Perhaps not, Jack. You think me a cad, a brute, evidently. Very well. Perhaps I am. When a man's had his domestic life torn into tatters and flaunted before the public by a damned loose woman——"

"Let me remind you that you are speaking of Gladys's mother," interrupted the young man.

"All very well for the man who's never been bitten to have no fear of a mad dog. Cultivate as much as you please the divine virtue of forbearance with her class——"

"Apparently, this lady is not 'classed,'" said Adrian.

"Come, Adrian," resumed Lorimer, as the two pulled themselves up on the brink of a quarrel. "Man to man, you ought to sympathize with me."

"Mr. Lorimer, you are Gladys's father. From your hand I am soon to receive her at the altar. I owe you, and have shown you, every consideration. But the attitude you hold toward the person whom I wish, with all my heart, I had never heard of makes my gorge rise, and I can't help it. If I wrong you, I ask your pardon. I can do no more."

Jack's face glowed with his honest emotions. Lorimer, surveying it with masked curiosity, ended by shaking him by the hand.

"My dear boy, you make me realize the flight of years. When you are my age you will be less inclined to—but there, good-bye for the present. I am off to meet your good father for a final discussion of our affair. If all goes as we hope and expect, to-day will be marked with a white stone in the united families of Adrian and

Lorimer. Together we'll make a deal that'll open the eyes of Wall Street. Come, man, put on a livelier face to meet your sweetheart. Gladys and my wife will, no doubt, join you here in a minute. Don't let them see that look on a happy bridegroom."

"You are right," said Adrian. "I think, for the present, I shall also take myself away, and try to get rid of my megrims."

"To resume duty later on," said Lorimer, jovially, but with an undercurrent of anxiety. "Come on, then, we'll go together to the parting of our ways."

Adrian hesitated, then hurried after his host. His sense of oppression in this room, formerly the temple of his love and hopes, was overpowering. A few moments after he had left it, Gladys, coming in on tiptoe to surprise him, as she imagined, with a book in his usual armchair, knew the sharp disappointment of finding him flown.

"Jack! why, Jack!" she called. "He was certainly here a moment since, for the servants told me so. Oh! there are mamma and Dolly and Lina coming in to make a list of the wedding presents. What a bore that one never has a minute to one's self in these days!"

Directly there was a formidable entrance of Mrs. Lorimer, richly gowned in afternoon house dress, followed by the prospective bridesmaids, Dolly Gay and Lina Thurston, in walking costume, who forthwith darted like humming birds about the room, assembling jewelers' packages and boxes on the large centretable, and giving vent to delighted exclamations as the unpacking progressed. Gladys, who, despite her sentiment, was only a mortal maiden, soon checked her sighs and made merry with her friends, Mrs. Lorimer seating herself behind the blotter and inkstand, to make entries as each present was in turn disclosed.

Mrs. Lorimer was in excellent humor—almost at the climax of earthly satisfaction. Not only had the business combination of the

Adrian and Lorimer families sufficed, at this most critical juncture in her husband's affairs, to tide over difficulty, but it had averted ruin and saved an exposure that would have meant disgrace in the public eye. Last, but not least, this marriage promised her a long-desired social opportunity.

She had never been able to conquer certain prejudices held against her in the circle in which the first Mrs. Lorimer had moved by right of birth and family connection. The best people, or those so considered by the second Mrs. Lorimer, had shown a persistent objection to admitting her farther than the outskirts of their little paradise. As Gladys grew into womanhood there had, indeed, been symptoms of a melting of the ice. Old friends of Gladys's lovely and unfortunate mother had remembered the child's existence, pitied her, decided that it was her due to rejoin their ranks in spite of the rather dubious papa and the indubitably vulgar stepmother. Invitations had begun to come for Miss Lorimer, from some of which it was impossible to exclude her parents. And, finally, the luck of this early marriage, with all its concomitants of good family and wealth, gave Mrs. Lorimer her chance to send out cards on her own account to every one of the people she most aspired to know. A list, pored over as pious anchorites pore over their breviaries, had been made by her. The secretary most *à la mode* for addressing envelopes had been secured, to prevent her making mistakes in generations, inviting divorced couples together, dead men and women "out of mind," or discarded members of fashionable cliques. The invitations finally sent out for the ceremony and reception embodied the second Mrs. Lorimer's highest ideals of the rewards of the strenuous life.

Also, Gladys once married and off her hands would remove from her a moral pressure she had recently had occasion to feel peculiarly galling. Mrs. Lorimer had, indeed, reached that second Summer of the material-

ist which finds restraint in self-indulgence the more trying because the Winter of discontent is in full view.

To Gladys, of course, fell the first duty of opening the boxes and parcels, reading cards, and handing the contents over to Dolly and Lina, who in turn submitted them to Mrs. Lorimer. The elder lady had provided herself with an elaborately bound blank book, in which she registered the gift, its number, a remark pertaining to it and the donor's name. As she thus obtained the pleasure of familiarly inscribing the nomenclature of several members of the paradise from which she had been hitherto shut out, the task was pleasing, and her smiles abounded, widening upon delicately tinged and powdered cheeks.

"Four hundred and forty-two!" cried Dolly Gay, holding up a silver candelabrum in either hand. "Mr. and Mrs. Howard de Lancey. The sixth pair."

"Four hundred and forty-three!" exclaimed Lina Thurston, exhibiting a couple of bonbon dishes. "Miss Robinson. Eight of these altogether, and one odd one from a needy millionaire."

"Hush, my dear!" replied Mrs. Lorimer, in a conclusive tone, due to Miss Robinson's social eminence. "Write an *extremely* nice note to her, Gladys."

"One carriage clock. Mrs. Van Arden!" exclaimed Dolly, taking it from Gladys's indifferent hand.

"Mrs. Van Arden!" exclaimed Mrs. Lorimer, flushing proudly. "Let me see the card!"

"No mistake; it's from the Grand Panjandrum herself, with the little round button on the top!" cried saucy Lina. "It looks second-hand, Gladys, and will do for your fourth story back."

"Lina! Miss Thurston!" interposed Mrs. Lorimer, rebukingly. "Don't think of sending your note of thanks to Mrs. Van Arden, Gladys, without my looking over it. I am quite sure now that she will come to the wedding," she added, in an undertone of joy permeated with awe.

"I couldn't possibly be grateful for Mr. Clayton's horrid little spoons," whispered the lawless Dolly, holding the objects in question up for survey.

"My dears!" said Mrs. Lorimer, in her best Sunday-school manner, visibly strengthened by new social prospects, "we should be grateful for all intent at kindness from our fellow-men."

Lina laughed.

"After forty—perhaps," she said, with large indifference.

"I am obliged to leave you, young ladies," soon remarked Mrs. Lorimer, to whom the companionship of Gladys's bridesmaids was not proving an unqualified pleasure. "I have made an appointment to receive a visit before tea from the secretary of our Association for Suppressing Vice in High Society."

"Did you expect to suppress it before tea, dear Mrs. Lorimer?" asked Lina.

"Take my place, Gladys," said the lady, rising and looking around her at the growing array of silverware and costly nothings encumbering tables and chairs. "How kind our friends have been!"

"All the bread you and Mr. Lorimer have cast upon matrimonial waters coming back to Gladys," said Lina.

"If one could have the trousseau and presents without the man!" added Dolly, thoughtfully. "But there seems no such combination possible."

A footman and page, entering burdened with more parcels, walked in line, with military precision, to the writing table and surrendered them.

"No one has called with a box from Madame Collette?" asked Mrs. Lorimer of the footman, and was answered in the negative. "Too bad Collette should be behind time! I especially wanted you to try the dress on to-day, as to-morrow will be so rushed, and I cannot remand the visit of our secretary," went on the lady, addressing the trio at the table. "That will do, Thomas; if a messenger from Collette calls, send her up at once."

"The dress?" asked Dolly, with prompt feminine ecstasy.

"The dress?" echoed Lina, rapturously.

"Oh, what luck we should be here when it comes home. Mine came yesterday, and is perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Miss Gay. "Collette has done herself proud."

"Look, girls!" cried Gladys, absorbed in a bulky parcel she had just undone; "was ever anything so sweet and dear?—a crazy cushion in silk patchwork, from that old duck of an Agnes! She began it when I was first engaged, and it's been such a mystery! Don't laugh, Dolly and Lina. For years, if I've stirred in the night, Agnes has come to me. She sleeps with one ear open for me, I tell her. . . . A bit of everybody's best frocks. . . . Dear Agnes! No hands but her rough ones shall lace on my wedding gown."

"Gladys, that's you all over," exclaimed Miss Gay, as the girl in a tender reverie stroked the cushion before replacing it in its box. "Here's a nice little promising parcel I'm dying to have you open. No card with it, either. Fancy not getting the credit of one's outlay!"

Smiling, and still under the spell of her old nurse's surprise, Gladys undid the tiny parcel placed in her hands by Dolly, all of the party exclaiming in satisfaction over the result. On a velvet bed lay a leaf of shamrock fashioned of costly emeralds, and hanging to a chain set with diamond and emerald points. It was a jewel that might have been worn by a king's daughter. A little chorus of admiration and wonder attended its passage from hand to hand. Even Mrs. Lorimer was arrested in her flight, to join in the speculation as to whence the dainty thing had come.

"This is, to my taste, the most delicious ornament you've had!" cried Lina, enviously. "No doubt some of Jack's family have sent it; but who—who could consent to do such an adorable action unknown to fame?"

While the pendant rested in its new owner's rosy palm, and Gladys's brow

knitted with wonderment as to the giver, the footman, returning, announced to his mistress the presence of Miss Pincher in the reception-room down stairs.

"Our honored secretary. Say I will come directly," exclaimed Mrs. Lorimer. "But first I must put some of these things away in a place of safety." Gladys assisted her while she carried a number of the more conspicuous articles across the room, placing them on the shelves of a closet. But the girl did not thus resign her latest gift, the chain of which she had thrown around her neck. For some unfathomable reason this token had at once assumed to her a value and importance unknown in her other presents. Her one desire was to be free to fly to the telephone and confide the fact of its arrival to Jack. Making a device of showing other bridal finery in her bedroom to her friends, she rid herself of these laughing maidens and flew out on the landing of the stairs, passing through a doorway curtained with greenish gray velours that made a perfect setting for her white-robed figure and roseate bloom.

As she stood waiting eagerly at the instrument she seemed a very image of youthful hope and love. Her ripe lips bent themselves to the mouthpiece tenderly, her voice thrilled with happiness when answering her lover's challenge.

"Oh, you *are* there!" she said, with a little, satisfied sigh. "I was so afraid I'd miss you again. Jack, who could have sent me the loveliest pendant and chain all set with emeralds? Some of your people, I think. No? Well, do hurry up and see it. I was so disappointed when I found you were gone. Good-bye."

"Gladys!" called Mrs. Lorimer, rather crossly.

"Yes, mamma," she said, returning to the morning-room.

"Now this is finished, I hope we may have a little rest. Pray do not encourage those girls to remain longer. Their eternal giggling and answering back gets on my nerves."

"Poor mamma! We are upsetting you and your house!" cried Gladys. "Never mind; in a little while you'll be rid of me, and Jack will have all the bother."

"Nobody can say I've not done my best by that child," thought Mrs. Lorimer, as the bedroom door closed on the disturber of her peace. "But the marriage is a big relief. When it's over, and Dick and I go abroad, we'll see if I don't treat myself to a little let-up from the devoted step-mother business."

V

As Mrs. Lorimer walked across the Persian rug, on which her silken skirts rustled aggressively, pomp and the pride of life written in every line of her face and figure, the door on the stairs opened and the footman ushered in a woman carrying by a strap handle a modiste's box covered with black oilskin.

The newcomer was tall, especially graceful, clad in close-fitting dark tweeds, her bronze hair covered by the little veil of black gauze drawn across her face. She paused on entering, and Mrs. Lorimer, though near-sighted and thick-skinned as well as panoplied in her own importance, could not fail to observe the slight defiance of her pose as she halted near the door. The lady of the house did not, however, consider that the personality of a mere dress-maker's young person warranted the exertion of lifting her gold-handled lorgnon for a closer investigation. As a rule, she treated all her employees as inevitable offenders, and addressed them accordingly.

"I must say, Madame Collette has taken her time about the dress," she said, icily. "Thomas, send Coralie to me."

Coralie, the lady's maid, as anxious as the rest of the feminine establishment concerning this arrival, was on the footman's heels. She came in with the air of an admiral assuming command of a quarterdeck, swooped on the newcomer's burden and pat-

ronizingly desired her to wait for the box.

"She will stay, of course, to make any trifling alteration needed. You will be competent for that, I suppose, although I shall certainly inform Madame Collette that I do not permit her to send me persons of bad manners and evidently sullen temper."

As Coralie, with a superior smirk, glided off with the box, the stranger did not in the least degree alter her pose, nor did she speak a word.

"Go over there and sit in the alcove by the window," said Mrs. Lorimer, sharply. "If they want you, they will call you to Miss Lorimer. Otherwise, you will take your box and go."

The woman softly crossed the room and withdrew into the retreat indicated, Mrs. Lorimer following her progress by a high-pitched order to the servant, given with insulting emphasis:

"Thomas, until Agnes comes do you stay here; and remember, you are responsible for the valuables around."

Directly afterward Agnes hurried into the room, and Thomas, tongue in cheek, betook himself down stairs to narrate the incident. Agnes, looking about her nervously, ran over to the dressmaker's assistant and folded her in her arms.

"My lamb! To come back to your own old home again like this! It is more than ye can bear. Stop trembling, child; do."

"It is rage that's making me tremble," cried Marian, stormily. "That insolent creature treating me like a thief! Oh, I could kill her, Agnes!"

"My dear, my dear, I told ye how it would be," pleaded the old woman, terrified.

"No, I can control myself, and will. Only, when shall I see my child?"

"You must chance it, honey. Very likely she'll send for ye in there. Keep cool and brave."

"I'm brave as Julius Cæsar," said Marian, "and I'll die sooner than betray myself."

"You're crying now. Oh, dear, dear! And ye were cool as a cucumber in the cab."

With a mighty effort Marian conquered her emotion, answering in a gay tone:

"I always loved adventure, and you know I'm a splendid actress. Don't bother that poor old head of yours and, trust me, all will go well."

To quiet herself she walked to and fro in the room, noting the changes in decorations, pictures and furniture. To this house, then so far up town as to be regarded as a pioneer's experiment, she had removed when her husband's first rapid rise of fortune justified the outlay. Into its building had gone her cherished ideas of nicety and conformity to their station in life. The very books on the shelves had been bought and often handled by her. A thousand recollections assailed her of the disillusionment that had here resulted from talks and quarrels with her husband. It was here, too, that she had come to the desperate resolution that wrecked her life. Almost any other room in the house would have meant less to her, except Gladys's old nursery. That threshold she would never have dared to cross with feet that had strayed so far from it into a way so thorny! . . .

With eyes blinded by tears she espied on a side table littered with photographs, miniatures and dainty bits of silver, a picture framed in glittering rhinestones, and stooped to it, uttering a cry of joy.

"This is she, Agnes! It speaks! It breathes!"

"Her last. Taken for the bridegroom," nodded Agnes, assentingly; then, at the sound of a peal of laughter from the bedroom, turned her gaze nervously in that direction.

Marian, with a quick movement, slipped the photograph out of the frame and into the bosom of her blouse, and, with Agnes, lent ear to the voices beyond the closed door.

"That's not her laugh, Agnes," she exclaimed; "there's a hard note in it."

"That's Miss Thurston, one of the

bridesmaids, but a good girl eno'," said the old woman. "That other's little Miss Gay, who's always a-bubbling like a spring in the woods in the old country."

"Why doesn't *she* laugh, Agnes?" asked Marian, listening eagerly. "Is she sad, or sorry for anything? It can't be she isn't happy in her choice."

"Bless ye, she's just dead in love with Mr. Adrian," said Agnes, chuckling; "and small blame to my girl, ayther, as the sayin' is. Every servant in this house wants to go and live with 'em."

The door opened. Marian started electrically. But it was only the lady's maid, carrying a sash or scarf of white, transparent stuff fringed with orange blossoms, which she handed to Marian.

"Miss Lorimer thinks these orange blossoms should be tacked in place," she said, giggling in a genteel manner. "They're that loose they'll be falling off before the bride gets up the church aisle."

"I will do it," said Marian, taking the sash eagerly. "I have my sewing things in my pocket."

Agnes breathed more freely when the maid departed. Mrs. Hatch returned to the retired corner of the great bay window, and, sitting behind a clump of palms and rubber trees, fell to work, while Agnes set about picking up bits of wrapping paper and boxes, and tidying the room. A noise outside made Marian start again.

"Agnes, is Gladys coming out?" she said.

"Tut! tut!" answered the nurse; "if it isn't madam coming back again! I did hope that secretary female would keep her below—settling the hash of every sinner God let be born into the world, except their two selves. Child, ye can't stay here! You're shaking like a leaf. Go, quick. I'll make some excuse for ye."

"It's too late, and I wouldn't if I could," said Marian, doggedly, drawing back farther into her hiding place.

"Our budget was smaller than usual to-day," observed Mrs. Lorimer, whom a course of Miss Pincher's flattering homage had put again on

her righteous pedestal. "Well, Agnes is all right? Is that saucy person gone? Have you seen the wedding gown?"

She advanced to enter the bedroom door, but was met by the maid, who informed her that Miss Lorimer begged madam to wait where she was for a few moments, and would she send Agnes, please?

"Very well. Go, Agnes; I have a letter here I will read meanwhile," said the lady, subsiding into an arm-chair Mr. Lorimer had once sent home for Marian's use in holding her baby.

Agnes, with a miserable side glance at Marian's covert, followed Coralie. But the old woman need not have feared any increase of temptation to self-betrayal on the culprit's part through the fact of Mrs. Lorimer's presence in the room. It but served to stiffen Marian's resolution to carry on her effort to the end. She felt that she would rather die than let this woman have a chance to order her in contumely from the house. But she had not counted on the ordeal next befalling her: nothing less than the entrance into the morning-room of Lorimer himself, whom Agnes and she had ascertained to have left the house before they ventured to drive up to it.

Marian's blood ran chiller in her veins than ever she had known it in the sad years of tribulation, but she dared not follow her proud impulse to spring to her feet, avow herself and take the consequences. She cowered farther back into her corner, feeling, rather than seeing, Lorimer go up behind his wife and draw her face backward for a kiss.

"It's all right, Madge, old girl," he said, in deeply exultant tones. "By George, we've turned the corner."

"You've won, Dick? We're safe? How?" she asked, nervously.

"Hush. Not here! I'll tell you later. It's the biggest thing of my life, and only you know how near we've come to everlasting smash. Those old, prating Puritanical fools,

the Adrians, are fairly in the net, and I'll make 'em pay high for the privilege. Come, Madge, toss those Social Purity letters of yours into the wastebasket. Just as soon as we're foot-free from the girl we'll go abroad and have a jolly time on our own account. We'll have money to burn, Mag; money to burn. And that's better than dancing to the tune of the society fiddle here, where, spite of all, the women still give you the go-by."

"You promise?" she asked, sharply. "No backing out, mind, on the score of business. You'll take me abroad, spend money freely, and let me get a rest from these old reforms and charities?"

"I need change myself, Mag. I'm overworked, overworried, and besides, I've been seeing ghosts. Yes, I'll treat; to a high figure, too. Hang me, Mag, if I know any younger woman that's a patch on you for charm! I'm dead stuck on you, madam, and I'm not ashamed of it!"

He kissed her again, and Marian heard a cooing voice in answer:

"If I had only been the first!"

"Why, Mag, I care more for your little finger than I did for her whole spoilt, hysterical body."

"Yet she was called pretty," said the cooing voice again.

"Humph! When I married her she was pretty, and devilish lively and bright—all fine words; but she broke my love up when she got to thinking too much of me—exactng too much. You, Mag, have a different hand on the reins. But here lately, I'll own up, I've sometimes thought it might have been different with *her*, you know, if I'd been a little easier. I do believe she loved me once."

"Loved you! that creature? Don't deceive yourself." The voice was sharp and hard now, with an undertone of eager malice. Marian, whose head had been bowed like a rain-drenched flower, straightened herself suddenly.

"Perhaps you're right," answered the man. "A fellow gets to be a

softy sometimes, when he thinks of long ago."

"She never loved you. She disgraced you publicly. Remember the sting of that."

"Damn her! I don't forget," said Lorimer, firing up.

"There's my own Dick again! I declare, you frightened me, harking back to that degraded woman. What could have possessed you! For my part, I don't see how she could have had the heart to give you up. Nobody's so handsome as you, Dick—so clever, so successful."

"Mag, you bewitch me when you look like that. After all, a grown daughter's a weight we'll feel lighter to be rid of. We'll begin life over again, from this on. There's plenty of fun ahead, and we'll go the pace."

Marian, in an agony, had started to her feet. The air around her seemed stifling, the scent of the flowers in the window boxes made her gasp, the blood beat in her temples. It was not this she had bargained for in steeling herself to meet the ordeal of returning, like a thief, into her former home.

The moan that escaped her was, fortunately, unheard by the other occupants of the room, for at that instant came from Gladys's bedroom the chant of the Wedding March from "Lohengrin," sung by fresh young voices. Through the leaf screen Marian saw old Agnes come out first, holding back the portières for the passage of Dolly and Lina, walking and singing, hand in hand. After them followed Gladys, her slight young figure arrayed in a robe of white satin, the tip of the long straight train of which was jealously caught up from contact with the floor by Coralie, the maid. Then the girls halted, Gladys passing between them, and, with a sudden impulse, kneeling at her father's feet.

By this impetuous movement of lonely girlhood the little comedy of rehearsal was suddenly changed in character.

Gladys bent her veiled head upon

her father's knee and burst into sudden tears. While the unseen mother stretched out her arms with a mighty longing to her child, Mr. Lorimer looked annoyed, embarrassed, drew back and finally rose to his feet, speaking in harsh, sarcastic tones.

"Very pretty, my dear, but a trifle theatrical. Keep that sort of thing for Jack, when you want to score a point."

In his heart he was repeating, "Her mother, to a dot." The resemblance, less of person than of manner and expression, stabbed him like an avenging knife. His impulse, man-like, was to put the door between him and the girl as soon as possible; and brusquely inviting his wife to go with him into the billiard-room and be rid of these frills and follies, he hurried out, Mrs. Lorimer elaborately following.

All the mirth had gone out of the little group. Gladys, pale and pained, dropped into a chair, Agnes hovering protectively around her; Coralie disappeared; the two visitors, making voluble excuse that they had already overstayed their time, kissed Gladys sympathetically, and with looks that spoke volumes took their leave.

Gladys turned to Agnes with a swift glance of despair.

"You see! you see!" she cried, pitifully. "He hated to look at me. What did I remind him of, Agnes? Was it my own mother? Oh! if she were only here there'd be one in the world besides you to care to see me in my wedding gown!"

"May I try the sash now, Miss Lorimer?" said an exceedingly soft voice beside her. Gladys started and sat up, shocked at her exposure of secret grief to alien ears. Her impulse was to speak haughtily and dismiss the intruder, but one glance into the large, soft, yearning eyes bent upon her made her, on the contrary, rise obediently and stand before a mirror in the panel of the wall, where a good effect of their work might be obtained. She did not observe that Agnes, drawing off abruptly, had

gone over to the far end of the room, leaving them quite alone.

"You saw me come in? You are quite satisfied with the gown?" asked the girl, making a strong effort to conquer her recent agitation.

"Oh, more than satisfied. It is quite perfect. I can find fault with not the smallest thing," answered the dressmaker, and again the tender cadence of her tones fell soothingly on Gladys's ear.

"We were not quite sure about the lace ending on the folds of the train behind," went on the bride-elect, taking a little additional comfort from the loveliness of her own reflection at full length.

"I will adjust it," said the other, sinking to her knees, and, unseen by Gladys, almost burying her face in the shining, pearly folds of the train and the film of lace that covered it—welcome hiding place for that eloquent countenance of hers. The first touch of her child's warm young body had intoxicated her with long-restrained mother-love. Into her heart, seared with sorrow and scorn from her fellow-beings, flowed a sudden divine current. It banished the old fury from her veins, recreated all that woman owns most nearly akin to the angels.

"That's better, I think," said Gladys, surveying herself again. "Now, if you will lift the veil and let me slip the sash around my waist——"

"No! no!" exclaimed Marian, jealously. "You must not stir, please. I can do it all much better."

She had been anticipating the moment when her hands might clasp that pretty, slim waist. Eagerly her arms stole about her child, but when it became needful to withdraw them, without the embrace she coveted, the effort was too great. Her heart bounded wildly, her brain grew dizzy; she tottered, and Agnes caught her as she swayed backward.

"Why," cried Gladys, innocently, "the poor thing's ill, Agnes; she's faint. Put her in that chair while I fetch water, or—I saw brandy over on that table in the corner—I'll get that."

As the bride hastened in search of

stimulants Agnes breathed in Marian's ear an imploring request to keep up, for God's sake, until she could get her safely from the house.

"I will, I promise you. It's passing now," said Mrs. Hatch, to whom Gladys at once returned, carrying a glass of brandy, which she put to her mother's lips.

"How good you are—how dear!" whispered Marian, in reviving tones. "If you knew how ashamed I feel——"

"Don't think of it!" cried the girl. "I'm afraid you aren't strong; you look so white and tired. Collette shouldn't have sent you out to-day."

"I am getting better and stronger every moment," protested Marian. "I should be so mortified not to finish. There's a stitch or two still wanting to the skirt."

"If you really care so much," said Gladys, assentingly; and again the mother knelt behind the child, trying to thread a needle, and failing for her tears, till Agnes, in sympathetic dumb show, offered to accomplish it for her, and fumbled from the same cause.

"Why, you blind old bat!" cried Gladys, playfully, snatching the needle and thread from her nurse's hand. "It's a shame to keep her waiting on her knees. I believe—now don't contradict me, Agnes—you're crying to see your baby in her wedding finery!"

Laughingly, she passed the threaded needle to Marian, who resumed her task, while Gladys went on chatting with her nurse, gladdening the old woman's heart by praises of her wedding gifts, then turning to eulogy of the anonymous present recently received.

"Such a lovely pendant, Agnes; just what suits me; just what I want! Nothing but Jack's pearls has given me such pleasure. A bit of your own Irish shamrock, Agnes; and I've got it on at this minute, under my gown. Somehow—you'll think me silly—but it seems to warm my heart. . . . It's the kind of thing a mother would have chosen for her girl—and I need a mother, Agnes. Why!"—she interrupted herself, arrested by a sudden movement of the dressmaker—

"look, Agnes! The poor thing's ill again. I knew she was not fit!"

"All is finished now, at any rate," stammered Marian, pulling herself to her feet, though deadly pale and tremulous. "Please, Miss Lorimer, do not think of me again. I cannot bear to cloud your happiness."

"Rest a while, do," said the girl. "Over there, by the open window, is a little chair. Make her go, Agnes, and stay by her till she is better. I'll run away, now, and make Coralie take this off."

With the music of her child's voice ringing like joy bells in her brain, Marian, too weak, indeed, to resist, found her way back to the spot she had occupied before, Agnes attending her. But ere the little bride could carry her silken glories into seclusion, Adrian, who had accused himself of being a cold-blooded wretch unworthy of her trustful love in leaving the house without seeing her, returned. Coming in with the air of one accustomed to invade the place, he was caught on the threshold and transfixed by the lovely apparition of his promised wife.

"Oh, Jack!" cried Gladys. "Don't look, for the world! It's bad luck for you to look."

"I won't," he answered, shielding his eyes with his hat, but peeping over it, well pleased, at her image in the mirror.

"In two minutes I'll be back," she said, hurrying away from him. "Please read, or something, and presently I'll give you your tea."

He laughingly complied, or appeared to do so, by dropping into a chair and taking up a book.

"Agnes," said Marian, in a whisper, "go after her. Leave me alone with Mr. Adrian. I must speak to him; I must, I tell you. Go!"

The nurse, attempting protest, was overridden by imperious insistence, and Marian, her face and neck dyed crimson, advanced to Adrian, pausing beside his chair and addressing him by name.

He looked up from his book. She had not in the least overcalculated

the effect on him of her presence in this place. He sat staring at her in bewildered, horrified silence, then, remembering social courtesy, rose.

A long, ghastly gaze was bestowed by each upon the other. In him, the whole miserable truth was unrolling itself, taking shape in his mind, localizing itself beyond a peradventure. In her, the shame of thus avowing herself a secret marauder in the home from which she had been cast out struggled with her grief at inflicting such shame on him.

And with this man, before whom she now cowered with bent head, she had but a few short days ago felt herself on equal terms as friend, adviser, comrade.

He spoke first.

"Why are you here? How dared you come here?" he asked, in a tone she had never heard from him before.

"Have you not heard the story of Gladys's mother?" she asked.

"Last night, for the first time, from Mr. Cleave. God knows I did not dream of your identity with her till now."

"Then you know one dares anything to avoid falling back into a pit. Mr. Adrian, she could not recognize me. No one here suspects me. It was my last chance."

"It is a fearful risk for you and all of us," he said, gloomily.

"Gladys does not dream that her mother lives. For the others, I care nothing. I was starving for my child. Would you have let me go away unsatisfied? Ah, Mr. Adrian, I know you better. You wouldn't treat a tramp like that. You've the kindest heart in the world. Now that I know you're to have her, I am so much happier."

He did not answer, but his face softened.

"Don't forget what you said—'If you need me, I'll be there,' " she went on, encouraged. "I do need you, now, Mr. Adrian—awfully. Be forbearing, forgiving with me for this last offense. Let me plead with you to deal tenderly with my child. Take

her away from these cold, cruel people; take her into a home, a real home, where the world and the devil are kept like wolves at bay. Whatever comes to try your love, cling close to each other. Confide in her, cherish her, trust her, and she will never disappoint you. Oh, I can see your two lives blending into one and stretching out down the long years in happiness and peace. Do you think, then, it is likely I'd want to trouble you? Believe me, I am not selfish. After this, I'm going back to the realm of homeless spirits, and neither you nor she shall hear of me—never, never, never! There, Mr. Adrian, I've touched you. One word more—when the time comes for you to tell her about her mother, be as merciful as you can."

She paused, choking. Jack looked at her with strong compassion.

"I hate to let you go like this. You have my club address. Write me sometimes how you fare, and if you are ever in any distress that I can help, command me; but, my dear lady, you must know that every moment you linger here is dangerous. For Gladys's sake, Mrs. Hatch, do not delay."

Dusk was falling in the room as Gladys hurried back, gowned in her simple home attire. Marian, at the same moment, crossed the room and stood in a waiting attitude beside the door.

"Oh, you are waiting for your box?" said the young lady, pleasantly. "I believe Agnes is fetching it. Yes, here she is; and you must tell Madame Collette we congratulate her on the gown, but she must really take better care of you. Agnes, go and put her in the cab. Good-bye, and many thanks for your trouble."

"Good-bye," breathed Marian, softly, standing statue-like, while Jack Adrian, feeling tremulous as a woman, came up behind his bride. The moments seemed to him interminable before the door should close on hapless Mrs. Hatch.

"Might I—to you who are so good and thoughtful of others, Miss Lori-

mer," said the woman, in a low, strained tone—"would you let me offer you my congratulations on your marriage?"

Gladys turned, smiling, blushing, with a nestling movement toward her lover. To her surprise, his face was grave and shadowed as she had never seen it. She thought for an instant there was moisture in his eyes, and the nurse emitted a sound that seemed strangely like a sob.

But no; impossible. Gladys laughed at herself for the notion that everyone was keyed to her own pitch of sentiment.

But there stood the strange woman gazing at her with yearning, beseeching eyes, and Adrian, leaning down, said to her, gently:

"Give her your hand, dearest. One is never too rich in good wishes, do you think?"

Gladys held out her hand shyly, and Marian pressed it to her lips without speaking.

"Come, Gladys, to the library. I think we shall find everybody there," said Adrian, breaking the trying silence, in dread of what might occur. With an arm around her he led her out of the room.

"It is very, very odd," said Gladys, wonderingly. "One might almost think she loved me—but why?"

"Why, indeed, sweetheart?" he said, laughingly. But in his heart Adrian did not laugh.

"And this is the very end! oh, God!" exclaimed the mother, left behind.

"My dearie, my lamb, go, now," said the nurse. "The way's clear, and you've had your heart's wish. Take the cab, drive back to your hotel, and after my bit of supper I'll come and look after ye."

"Agnes, I believe something told her I am her mother!" cried Marian, wildly.

The woman seized her by the arm.

"There, hurry! What did I tell ye? It's the mistress coming in. Pick up the box and go. Lord save us! she mustn't find ye here like this."

But Marian stood, stupid, spell-bound. A moment more, and Mrs. Lorimer, announcing her coming fussily, sailed into the room and stood peering suspiciously into the gathering dark.

"Gladys! Jack! where are you? Tea is waiting in the library. Where in the world is everybody? Why haven't they lit these lights?"

Stepping back, she touched a button by the door, and a soft radiance filled every corner of the room. She saw Marian in tears, saw Agnes wringing her hands behind her—and recognition came.

"You! . . . You?" asked Mrs. Lorimer, a flutter of terror in her voice. "Why did you come here?"

Marian haughtily faced her.

"I once had occasion to ask the same question in the same place of you, madam, and when you were the intruder and I on my own ground. I had very good reasons for knowing that your motives were less creditable to you then than mine are now to me."

"I knew that you were alive, but I never dreamed you would have the impudence to push yourself in here," cried the woman, wrathfully. "This is Agnes's work, letting you in; and out she'll walk after you, the vile deceiver!"

"Having accomplished what I came for, I will relieve you of my presence," said Marian, whom danger had made cool.

Her daring seemed to dominate the situation, for Mrs. Lorimer did not stir until, as Marian passed, the hidden photograph of Gladys fell from her dress to the floor.

"As I supposed. Stealing my property! Who knows what else you have got stowed away about you?" she said, spitefully, snatching the picture from Marian's hands as the latter stooped to pick it up. "Oh, you needn't think you'll just walk out as you came in! People of your stripe must be managed by the police," and she put herself threateningly in Marian's path.

"Let me pass!" said Marian, firmly.

"You shall not, I tell you!" cried Mrs. Lorimer, ringing the bell close to her hand.

"You can harm only yourself by this," Marian said, shrugging her shoulders lightly. "For me, the worst has come and gone."

"Ask Mr. Lorimer to come to me here, immediately," said the lady of the house to the servant answering the bell. "Then stand at the front door, and let no one leave the house!"

The man, glancing suspiciously at Marian, then interrogatively at Agnes, hurried away, and there was no delay in the arrival of Mr. Lorimer.

"What's all this, Madge?" he said, on the threshold. "Charles says there's been a theft of some kind—some of the wedding presents—"

His sentence was cut short. His glance fell on Marian. Black wrath filled his face.

"You—you impudent, lying—!" he began; but she interrupted him.

"Let me go. I have seen my child. She does not know me. I have done no one harm," she cried, proudly.

"Vile, degraded creature!" cried Mrs. Lorimer. "Your presence in this house is an insult to Gladys and to me. But that's not the point. You stole one thing; no doubt you've secreted others. Give them up, or I'll have you searched."

"Oh, she's in no need of stealing, Mag," interpolated Lorimer, insultingly. "She's got her pocket full of cash, and knows how to get more, too."

"Then we'll just turn her out in the street, where she belongs," added his wife, seeing Marian flinch and grow white under his stinging words.

"Stop!" cried the goaded creature, suddenly. "Not another word till I have said my say. I wanted to go in peace, but you wouldn't let me. Then let us have it out! Oh, since I came into this house to-day I've tasted heaven and hell. When my child spoke to me, smiled on me, when I touched her warm, young flesh, and realized that it was part of

mine—when I felt once more the glad thrill of motherhood warming my veins, pulsing in my sad heart, I was drawn out of my gulf of misery as if by an angel's touch. There's no sacrifice I wouldn't have made to keep good enough for Gladys. There was no rancor left in my heart for any living being. I could have forgiven even you, Dick Lorimer, for the ruin of my life. But it wasn't to last. I hadn't deserved such bliss. I'd been walking up the arch of a rainbow, and when I reached the top found that I must go down on the other side. But thank God you two can't rob me of the supreme hour of happiness that I have known! Yet now, *now*—do you see?—you have dragged me back into hell. This hypocritical woman, with her vicious taunts—you, with your cold brutality—have made me desperate. To punish you I'd risk any sentence. When I crossed that threshold, this afternoon, I was a penitent, soft-hearted woman, yearning to walk in the right path. Now I'm bitter, vindictive, dangerous; and you've only yourself to thank for it!"

"Dick, send for a policeman," exclaimed Mrs. Lorimer, shrinking to her husband's side.

"Let her rave herself out, and then turn her loose," observed Lorimer. "I was the worst kind of a fool to parley with her at all, and I suppose I must reap the consequence."

"Put my life beside that woman's, will you?" said Marian, scathingly, "or match it with your own, Dick Lorimer, and then let heaven be judge between us."

"There will be time enough for that," he answered, coldly. "For the present, the world suffices me, and you will not deny that its verdict is in our favor. If you take my dispassionate advice, Mrs. Hatch, you'll give up this cheap tragedy business and go back to—say—the—er—side-walk."

"You *dare*?" she cried, furiously. "Then, Mr. Lorimer, let me tell you that if I can't answer your foul words in kind I can avenge myself in an-

other way. What of the combination in business by which you have just saved yourself from ruin and disgrace through the marriage of your daughter to Jack Adrian? What if Adrian's people—if Adrian himself—knew you as you are? Would you be so content with your position then?"

"Hold your mischievous tongue, will you?" he cried, savagely, putting his hand on the bell, "or, in two minutes, my servants shall turn you out of doors for a common sneak-thief."

"Ring, then! Call all your household, if you choose. Let me tell my story first to them, and afterward to whomsoever it may concern."

"Damn you, I'm not afraid of you!" he shouted, and to prove it touched the bell.

There was a moment's critical silence, while Lorimer, stubborn and sombre, remained facing Marian, old Agnes clinging to her sleeve and praying her to have self-control. Mrs. Lorimer, cowed and whimpering, sat crouched in an armchair. When the two menservants, presenting themselves, stood awaiting orders on either side of the door, Marian felt herself keyed to the highest pitch of nervous desperation. Now, indeed, was she fairly reckless of results.

In her veins ran the hot fire of vengeance. In spite of Lorimer's bravado she saw that her mention of his private affairs in the matter of the alliance with the Adrians had hit hard. Her quick wit taught her that with this weapon in hand she had only to strike again to be more than even with those who had so cruelly wronged and wounded her. The thought of their discomfiture was a sweet morsel in her mouth. To speak out before their menials, to publish them to the world as they were, seemed the most precious privilege now left her. The flicker of appeal in the woman's coward eyes, the brutal rage in Lorimer's, were an irresistible invitation to Marian to do her worst.

While she stood, unconsciously framing her sentences so that they might cause most shame and pain,

her whole being transformed with the strength of her emotion, a soft sound came to her ear—the sound of a girl's voice on the landing of the stairs—Gladys bantering her sweet-heart and laughing joyously.

Instantly Marian's form relaxed from its tense, impassioned pose, a great change came over her face; she listened, trembling violently, and the vengeful gleam of her eyes was drowned in tears.

"I—I will go now," she gasped, bowing her head before her enemies.

"I thought so," sneered Lorimer, but he had the wisdom to say no more.

Marian gave him one last, mute, terrible look; then, lifting her box weakly, the unwelcome Mrs. Hatch passed, conquered and broken, out into the night.

VI

It was a stale Midsummer morning in a quarter of New York where the jarring clatter of wheels over cobblestones, the ceaseless whiz of elevated trains, and the cries of children squeezed out of overcrowded homes to play in the street, made existence to weak and weary brains tolerable only in the rear of the houses wherein their possessors were compacted. In a back room, at a window opening on a fire-escape, which some deft hand had decked with a few boughs of wild-wood greenery thrust into glass preserve jars, a woman sat at work.

When she looked out over the green boughs hers was the privilege of seeing the sunshine, so blinding in the street, here fall partially filtered through the foliage of an ailanthus tree in the next yard. This tree, a morning-glory vine creeping up from the fire-escape of a German woman below them, and the fair field of azure overspreading all, were her present substitutes for the beauties of nature with which she had formerly been familiar at Newport and Bar Harbor at this season of the year.

Her inward vista ended in a

dark middle room, every spot of whose ceiling, every crack of whose faded wall paper, she had scanned while lying on her back, staring upward with hot eyes, during the recent weeks of a long and painful illness. There, in the far corners, stood two little iron beds made up with exquisite neatness and conventual purity of linen. One of these beds she had thought never to leave till carried from it with rigid feet foremost down the common stairway of the tenement-house. But now between the half-open sliding-doors, with their panels of cheaply ornamented ground glass, she surveyed it with the complacency of a graduated invalid.

In a spot screened by a clothes-horse covered with cotton stuff, a gas stove stood on a pine table that was additionally encumbered with the few utensils and supplies requisite to the canary-bird ménage of two women, one of whom ate through gratitude to another, who had in these days more appetite than food.

In spite of its cleanly squalor and the paucity of its furnishings, the place wore a strangely festal air. Long scarfs of multi-colored gauzes hung from a golden Maypole. Japanese lanterns fastened to sticks decked with tinsel fringes were ranged around the walls. Stuffed birds swung in gilded hoops. A parterre of paper roses, red and white, bloomed on the mantelpiece, otherwise arrayed with odds and ends of old china, shells, fancy mugs and photographs, such as a family servant might accumulate from a lifetime of little gifts. The table at which the wan worker sat was ablaze with sheets of brightly tinted tissue paper, gay ribbons and a variety of finished toys in the guise of cotillion favors.

When at last the final touches were bestowed on a French Polichinelle in cap and ruffle affixed to the summit of a gilded staff, she held him aloft, yielding him glad and whimsical homage.

"There, Mr. Polichinelle," she cried, joyously. "You are all ready for the Egertons' dance at Newport!"

You've a conceited smirk on that jolly red face of yours. Now, don't go and be so set up by your rise in life as to forget your old friends and your humble origin. Remember, my boy, that pride goes before a fall, and you're not, like me, constructed to survive a smash. I wonder if you realize what you're going from, and where you will bring up. Here—poverty, distress, a poor, battered woman whom fate would not spare when she prayed to be set adrift on the unknown sea, working her heart out to make you beautiful! There—lights, music, flowers, the soft sea air, the sparkle of gems, the rustle and gleam of satins, and smiling dancers whirling in a brilliant round! But don't let it take you in, Polichinelle! I've been there. I know it all by heart. In those days life seemed one long reach of shining parquetry, to be whirled over to the music of a hidden orchestra. Is it better to have had and lost, like me, Polichinelle, or never to have had at all, like you? Do I envy you? God knows I don't. My star's behind another kind of cloud. Now, dear sir, accept this tinsel cravat as a last token of my esteem! Polichinelle, I'll swear you're the image of old Beau Bannister, who used to dangle in my train. He'll be at the ball, so look out for your twin. Really, I think you're as well fitted to express ideas as he is, poor old dear!"

She laughed. For a moment she was again Marian Lorimer in the heyday of her insolent young beauty, queening it among the fine folk who delighted to pattern after her.

Then the door opened and an old woman came in, carrying a homely basket on her arm, and hot and breathless from three flights of steps.

"Laughing, my dear?" she said, with a sort of patient cheerfulness now become her habitual manner. "Thank the Lord ye feel like it! And what do ye suppose? I've not only got the money for your candle shades from Laferrière, but an order for twelve more in palest green. And you'd better believe I stopped at the provision shop! Here's meat for soup,

and the beautifullest little fat Spring chicken ye ever saw, with tea, sugar, a little bottle of cream and a whole half-pound of that butter ye like the best—little finger rolls, too. You'll lunch like Queen Victoria to-day."

Marian ran over to her and examined the contents of her basket gleefully.

"I never saw such richness, dear," she said; "but—what's here for Agnes?"

"Oh, childie, with a cup o' that grand tea and a slice o' buttered toast I'll be in clover," was the answer.

"Agnes, you're an unblushing old fraud!" exclaimed the lady. "Now if you don't eat with me, share and share alike, I vow I'll starve."

"Child, sure as ye live, I stopped in a restaurant and had a plate of stew. It'll be to-morrow before I feel hungry again. Lucky I paid rent for these rooms so long ahead! That poor Mrs. Murphy above us has to turn out o' hers, and we're good for another month, thank God."

"My illness, two doctors part of the time, a trained nurse and expensive medicines have made an awful vacuum in your little hoard," said Marian, mournfully. "You shouldn't have done it in such style, nurse. A hospital for me would have been far wiser, and you know it."

"What's the odds, so long as ye pulled through? I never was forehanded in my life, Mrs. Lorimer, any more than ye. We're a pair of babies for spending money, child."

"But now I am well again, Agnes—so splendidly well——"

"Yes, splendidly well," echoed Agnes, as the speaker paused for an assenting answer.

"—and I have made such a capital start in business, it won't be any time before we recoup again, and I'll pay you back with interest. All will come out right, with such orders as Mrs. Egerton's to start on."

"Bless Miss Thurston's heart for getting it for ye!" cried Agnes, infected by her zeal.

"Yes, bless her heart!" repeated

Marian. "And to think that I used to dine with the Egertons and they with me! I had a tiff with Kate Egerton once, when we were both on the board of a swell charity, and she went under in the fray. She little knows how Time's whirligig is bringing her revenge to-day! The one thing that bothers me, Agnes, is Doctor Cotesworth finding out my secret."

"My child, it had to be. With ye so ill, and me so scared, and he that I'd known through his visits to the Lorimer family, what could I do but fetch him here? And then he sort o' found us out."

"I know; and he in turn gave us away to our good angel, Lina Thurston," said Marian, now on her knees packing away the pretty gewgaws she had completed. "I don't blame you in the least, Agnes dear; you couldn't have kept it in, any more than we could have lived without Lina Thurston getting me that first work for Laferrière, and buying me the materials. Like the lady she is, Lina took back the money she'd advanced for that stuff, as soon as I'd made the first sales. Just wait till some of Kate Egerton's pals ask her where she got these favors, and Mrs. Hatch will have her hands full of orders for more. We'll get out of this house, then, Agnes, in double-quick time. I'll have a tidy little showroom, where ladies will like to come, and a forewoman who knows her business in witching customers. Trust me for original ideas and all the rest. Why, we'll be rolling in money, Agnes, and have—don't jump out of your boots—chicken twice a week!"

Agnes, busy in her corner with the gas stove, heaved a sigh, and looked at her charge doubtfully.

"What is it, nurse? Out with it! I see you have some deep-dyed conviction you're afraid to speak."

"Dear, it's about Dr. Cotesworth. He that's thought ye the beauty of the world ever since he was a lad, and ye a young married lady in your husband's home."

"Now, Agnes, old girl, none of your palaver on that question," was

the answer, while Marian's head dived deep into the box. "Trust an old maid for romantic fancies!"

"My dear, he's the salt of the earth; he's——"

"Then Lina Thurston's bread will be well sprinkled with him," cried Mrs. Hatch. "It was you yourself who told me they are engaged."

"Servants' hall gossip's all I have to go on," replied Agnes, turning the half of her vaunted chicken on the grill. "They did say Miss Thurston had always fancied him—but since he's found ye again, poor gentleman, he's looked another way. And if ye hadn't bluffed him off——"

"Not one word, you matchmaker! Of all the preposterous fancies, that's the worst. When our two benefactors marry each other, Agnes, we will send them the biggest, fluffiest sort of a lampshade, with your compliments and mine——"

"It's queer, his having stopped away so long now—he that stretched out his hand to help ye, that watched over ye as anxiously as I. Ah! childie, ye can't help yourself—ye fascinate everybody, old and young. I can't mistake the looks I've seen him turn on ye. And they do say he's goin' to leave the country and settle in one o' them far-away places in South America or China or somewheres. When he's gone, and there's no callin' him back, perhaps you'll be sorry ye made so light o' him."

"But I don't make light of Robert Cotesworth, Agnes. God knows I don't. He's a big, true man, if ever one was—a good, gallant gentleman; and what he has been to me—poor waif fallen across his pathway—is laid up in heaven to his account. But it's a girl like Lina who ought to walk beside him in the future—he's her kind, she is. Do you think I'd be base enough to use my poor little chance to stand between them? Ah, no, Agnes, my day is done; the sea has swallowed up my setting star."

"Come, come, child; if it bothers ye I'll not mention his name again. Here's your tray, and I've cleared the

table. Sit ye down and eat every bit of this."

Marian sighed again, then smiled, and obediently seated herself before the tray.

"Oh, how good it smells!" she exclaimed, in answer to the old woman's look of eager pride. "Agnes, you are a trump at cooking, as at everything else. Now bring your own plate and cup and sit on the other side."

"My child, I tell ye I've had my dinner," protested Agnes.

"Yesterday, I dare say, you pious deceiver. Now mind me, old girl, or I'll not eat a mouthful. Take your full share, and we'll fairly riot over our first square meal in the last three days."

However, Marian's appetite was soon satisfied, while the older woman ate with healthy hunger, and meanwhile regarded, with covert yearning and anxiety, the still brilliant though wasted apparition opposite.

Deep down in Marian's long-sealed heart she had become aware of the springing up of a new and delicious emotion—an emotion that was yet so unduly hers, she thought, that she hung her head in consciousness of desire to appropriate and indulge it. A week or two before, when Robert Cotesworth made his visit the occasion of a tentative appeal to this feeling, she had laughed bitterly at the idea of its possible existence. Now—now— Was it because the old woman's gossip had put her in possession of the fact of his determination to leave the country, faintly outlined in his last talk with her? What else could have worked the miracle but the thought of long parting from one on whom she had come to lean, with utter dependence, for every hope of health and strength and daily sympathy?

"Ye don't like it?" asked Agnes, crestfallen.

"My luncheon? Indeed, yes! Immensely!" ecstatically exclaimed Mrs. Hatch. "Haven't I eaten more than in a long, long time?"

"Well, dear, now you're strengthened a bit, I've got a surprise for ye.

What'll ye say to our darling bride being on her way home? Yes, true enough, they're due on the *Campania* to-morrow, early. Miss Thurston told me, and said I was to let ye know it by degrees, but there aren't any degrees in the likes o' that, are there?"

"Agnes, you're like a sunburst!" cried Mrs. Hatch, radiantly. "But a moment ago I was thinking of how far-reaching and wide-spreading are the results of our own wrong actions, wondering why I might not dare to feel glad again in life. Now I am glad—healthily glad—glad with a joy of which no man, no moralist, no verdict of the world may rob me."

"When you're feeling black-like inside o' ye, dear, always think about your child. I've noticed it never fails to do ye good."

"I do. I do think of her. Oh, my Gladys, my Gladys! Agnes, how grand that she is coming home! Though I may never look at her or speak to her, I'll know she's near. I'll picture her, dream of her, as of old. Never can I forget the touch of her warm, strong young hand, the sweet odor of her breath, the soft texture of her flesh—*my* flesh, Agnes—that day, that beautiful day when I gained her—that hideous day when I lost her."

"My poor dear, something tells me you'll see her again. God couldn't be cruel enough to shut ye out from one more chance. Let's hope, anyhow; and now, child, ye must lie down and rest a bit, and let me finish packing all these here things. The expressman will call for them at four."

"Go away, Agnes. Don't you touch my playthings," cried Marian, wilfully, springing to her feet, then going down on her knees again before the packing case. "See! I'll finish them beautifully. Since you said that I might chance to see my child—wildly improbable though I feel such a hope to be—I have got new life in my veins. You are right, Agnes—God is just, not cruel, and maybe He'll take into account what I've done since—not before—I went under the ban."

As one by one the bright em-

blems of a gayer life than hers passed into eclipse in the packing case, the room, denuded of its finery, was revealed in all its sordidness and poverty. The hot afternoon melted into a hotter night. A teething child in the front apartment adjoining cried all through the long, stifling early hours, until, in despair, Marian stole forth to seek it, and carrying the little sufferer out on the fire-escape, sat with it there, wooing the breeze of dawn, while the mother found merciful repose.

The baby dozed, but its watcher kept open-eyed vigil. She was thinking that her own child was on the sea, sailing down the coast, nearing the friendly harbor. Again and again she prayed God to speed her beloved safely. Just then the whole world was narrowed for her to the confines of a single ship. The months of blank desperation following her daring visit to her old home, the near peril of death she had passed through, the new element strangely injected into her life and rigorously excluded from it, the reawakening to an existence of toil and stress, the darkness of the future—all were now merged in tumultuous joy at the thought of her child's vicinity.

Spite of the wretched night, Marian woke from a brief morning doze brighter and stronger apparently than Agnes had seen her in some weeks. Out of her garden of new-budding hopes the "black bat night had flown." For a morning paper had announced the arrival at the dock, earlier than expected, owing to an unprecedentedly quick run, of the steamer bearing, among others of interest to the fashionable world, the newly married pair, Mr. and Mrs. John Adrian, *en route* to their Adirondack camp.

VII

LATER in the day, Miss Lina Thurston, clad in cool, refreshing muslins, wearing a shady hat and carrying in her arms a great sheaf of Summer flowers, descended from a hansom

before Mrs. Hatch's door. Having once spent six months in a nurses' settlement in a congested district of the town, the sights and sounds of poverty were as familiar to her as daily bread. She now glided between the groups of sidewalk children, distributing to them a posy apiece from her armful, and then ran lightly up the steps to Marian's quarters, leaving behind her a trail of fragrance from sweet peas and nodding roses. She found Marian sitting at her usual table engaged in making candleshades, but looking like a new woman, so Lina averred.

"Not *the* new woman, please. I'm just the old, old kind, living on emotions and impulses, pinning my everlasting happiness on the sleeve of chance, and buoyed up by my own imagination of things rarely realized. To-day, however, I do feel strangely better, and these flowers of yours will complete the cure. Quick, Agnes! every glass and pitcher you can trump up, and let me riot in the beauties! You yourself make me think of some flower, Miss Thurston, but I have not yet found which one."

"I'll tell you," said Lina, smiling. "Peach blossom—not especially good looking, and concealing a bitter flavor."

"Mignonette, rather," corrected Marian, "with its clean, wholesome, health-giving perfume. Dear friend, one can never say the really grateful things one feels. It's only pretty, meaningless phrases that run off the tongue trippingly. But always remember that you've lifted me out of the valley of desolation. It's something to have done that for a fellow-being, isn't it? Now, I must tell you that Mrs. Egerton's huge case full of things got off safely, yesterday, and, if I do say it, will do credit to your recommendation. When I get the money for them, and for more work ordered by Laferrière, we'll be passing rich, Agnes and I. We're even talking about moving out of this house into better rooms, and in the Autumn spreading our wings and opening a little shop. Of course, capital's the rub."

"I'll help you," said Lina, looking at her with surprise, so gay, so light of heart she seemed. "I was just going to make an offer to become a 'silent partner,' or whatever you like to call it, in your venture. I've a small sum lying idle that I am glad to invest so well. You see, I count largely on your exquisite taste in purveying to the *monde où l'on s'amuse*."

"You dear, blessed woman!" cried Marian, overjoyed. "That rolls the last stone out of my path, since Dr. Cotesworth assures me that with care, and by avoiding any great mental strain, I am good for the ordinary span of life."

"He has not, then, convinced you that you need someone to take absolute, exclusive care of you?" interrogated Lina, brusquely.

Marian looked at her in surprise, then, very gently, answered:

"You know him, dear lady. It was he who brought you to me in my time of cruelest stress. Can't you realize that even the most clever and self-reliant man may sometimes act on an impulse of pity, through an obsession of missionary zeal? Ah! I am mocking, as usual; but don't mind. Whatever I may do, or leave undone where he's concerned, it's through no lack of appreciation or gratitude."

"Do you know that he is going away—that he is exiling himself from home and everything?"

"I know that in time he will see what is truly best for him," said Marian, very low.

"Mrs. Lorimer, you and I believe in each other, don't we?" answered Lina, bravely. "Very well, then. Let me tell you that Robert Cotesworth will not change. Put from your mind any cobweb of delusion on that score, and trust me implicitly that it is better so. Only, it seems cruel to let him go—alone. There, I know you are sore and weak and timid still; but neither you nor he is a child, or yet accountable to any human being. It is a new life I am pointing out to you, and over yonder, with half a world between you and your past, you may win the chance you've lost here. Now,

I won't let you answer me—not a word, please; you are not yet ready for the new view of things."

"Had ever good man so noble an ambassador?" cried Marian, tears rushing to her eyes. "But you are right—I am not fit to speak of it. Just now I am all a mother. Early this morning I stole out into the street to buy a newspaper, and since I have seen the glorious news that Gladys has returned, I can think of nothing else."

"Then you can bear hearing that I have just come from her," said Miss Thurston, scrutinizing the feeble, palpitating, yearning creature with grave sympathy.

During the weeks of her visitations to old Agnes's shabby abode, the friendship that had grown up between Miss Thurston and the poor waif of circumstance had strengthened into a devotion such as the world rarely sees among their sex. Lina, like Dr. Cotesworth, possessed by the indestructible charm of Marian's personality, had, like Cotesworth also, come to estimate her at her true worth. And when Lina realized that Cotesworth had, without warning, found himself surrendered heart and soul to a passion for Marian absorbing the full power of his manhood, she put aside self and gave rein to her vast desire to reconstruct the life of hapless Mrs. Hatch. To save Marian seemed to Lina the fulfilment of all her dreams of service to her fellow-beings. And to serve Robert Cotesworth, with whom for some years past she had worked hand in hand in the cause of charity, poor Lina would have renounced—did renounce, as we have seen—her own most secret hopes of happiness.

At this juncture, coming as she did from a special mission in Marian's behalf, to which Cotesworth, still sore from his rejection by Mrs. Hatch, and making preparations for a long absence from his native land, had inspired her, Miss Thurston gave herself the full joy of savoring good news in the act of distributing it. While Marian lay back in her chair, listening in fascinated silence, Lina told her all the

details of her visit to the Adrians at the hotel where they were stopping on their way through town. Marian drank in every item about her child's beauty and radiant happiness, about Adrian's sayings to his young wife, about Gladys's pretty rejoinders.

"But I must not tire you," Lina said, suddenly, pulling herself up in some alarm for the result.

"Tire me!" cried Mrs. Hatch. "You are giving me oxygen to live on!"

"Because," said Lina, deliberately and with tender intonation, "all I have said is only by way of preparing you for something better."

"Something better?"

"Mrs. Lorimer, don't let yourself get excited. Your doctor has given me leave to tell you——"

"What has Dr. Cotesworth got to do with it?" exclaimed Marian, puzzled.

"Don't you know he is an intimate friend of Mr. Adrian? He is also one of the biggest-hearted men I know. He took upon himself the responsibility of sending me to tell Mr. Adrian of your illness and your whereabouts. Of course, I took occasion to see Mr. Adrian apart from Gladys. I believe—I am sure—she has never yet been told——"

"Better so," said Marian, crimsoning.

"But nobody could have been nicer than Mr. Adrian. He was greatly shocked and touched by my story of your illness—and . . . Agnes, do you come and stand by Mrs. Lorimer while I tell her my best news of all."

"Gladys is coming here?" cried Marian, electrically. "Oh, yes! I see it in your eyes, I hear it in the tremor of your voice. Ah, God is merciful!"

"Mr. Adrian will bring his wife to look up her old nurse," said Lina, steadily, while Agnes slipped a sturdy arm around Marian's shoulders.

"Now—soon—to-day?" faltered Marian, passionately glad.

"Now, almost immediately—it was his first impulse. He felt that you

ought to see her, to be encouraged to get well. But you won't forget, Agnes—you won't let her forget—that Dr. Cotesworth is emphatic against her giving way to any sudden emotion."

"I know—I'm so grateful to him for this thought, and to you for executing it, I'll submit to anything."

"I rather think he will find it best to be here when they are," said Lina, a purple flush mounting around her eyes. "The truth is, I saw him for a moment when I came away from them."

"Oh, what plotters and planners you all are, and all against one poor little broken woman!" cried joyous Marian, her thoughts bounding ahead to the goal where they oftenest converged. "If you could ever feel the sudden delicious warmth that has come into my heart! Gladys here! my baby! my beloved!"

Her voice fell to so soft a note it might have been the echo of a dream. She closed her eyes in a little doze inspired by weakness, and Lina Thurston, with a final keen pang, thought she had never seen her rival look more beautiful. Roughly, almost, so quick the movement was, she leaned over and kissed Marian on the brow, then hurried from the room, while keen-sighted old Agnes, used as she was to Miss Thurston's abrupt ways, looked after her with adoring gratitude, the greater because of her partial comprehension of affairs.

"Miss Thurston is gone?" cried Marian, rousing presently. "Oh, Agnes, it's our guardian angel who has taken flight!"

"Never mind sorrowing after her, dearie," said Agnes, who was frantically putting the room to rights. "She's got her reward laid up above, for sure. The thing that's bothering me is that ye ought to change your dress."

"So I ought!" exclaimed Marian, surveying herself ruefully. "Get me that cream muslin—or no, my white-and-black."

"My dear, I just can't; we ate

them both up last week, when things were at their worst. I'd been hoping to save enough to get them out of pawn," answered Agnes, dolefully.

"Never mind; Gladys won't know your room-mate, and Adrian won't care. Brush my hair, Agnes, you old duck. I'm very thin, and decidedly shabby, but I'll have to do as I am."

"Do ye remember, lovie," suggested the old nurse, "how once ye used to give me finery I couldn't use, and you'd laugh at me for stowing it away in camphor and the like? Well, there was a Paris tea-gown, of a white crêpy stuff, trimmed with lace; ye got tired of it, and told me to never let ye look at it again. It wasn't half-worn, and I've got it yet."

"Why haven't you pawned that, too, you miser? What do you mean by hoarding the best of the batch?" asked Marian, rallying.

"I—I was just keeping it."

"For what?" queried Marian.

"For old times' sake, sure," said the woman, hurrying into the next room, holding one hand across her heart, as if Marian could see it bursting with the sorrowful intent, long treasured there, to save this special garment for the last toilette of her charge.

"How odd and jerky Agnes is to-day," thought Mrs. Hatch, settling and resettling Lina's flowers in their vases, which, as now arranged on her table, made a framework for her noble head and bust. "I suppose she's fairly overcome by the thought of her little Gladys coming here. I'm not overcome. I'm only calm and proud and thankful. I want to do nothing that will betray me to my child."

Agnes, who had been stooping over an ancient trunk in the inner room, now returned, carrying across her arms a fluttering garment of white, filmy stuff, from whose folds floated a faint odor of violets. At sight of it Marian's face changed to a sudden wistful pensiveness. Taking it across her lap, she stroked it curiously.

"Ah," she said, half to herself, "I

remember so well the day I bought it at Paquin's. Dick helped me to choose it—that was why I gave it up afterward—I couldn't bear the sting of remembering happier times. We came home to our hotel in the Rue Castiglione and drove out to the races at Auteuil afterward. All Paris was in the Bois that day of June. The carriages were four abreast, moving at a snail's pace in the alleys, all filled with pretty women and idle men. The sidewalks were crowded with people, the fountains and bands were playing, the horse-chestnut blossoms rose like pink spires on the trees, birds were singing everywhere, and sunshine, flowers, verdant slopes and vistas greeted us on all sides. I was beautifully dressed, and Dick sat beside me in the victoria, always whispering that he had as yet seen no woman to match his little wife in looks and *chic*. God! why couldn't that have lasted? Why does nothing last, except envy and spite and malice and all uncharitableness? I loved him so then I drank in his every word like gospel. Then the races were so gay, and we drove back, as we came, through a world *en fête*, and had our little dinner in our rooms, when Dick insisted I should wear this for him. *This, for him!* How he kissed my arms where the sleeves fell away! They were round and full and firm, not poor, wasted sticks like these. *This, for him!* Agnes, it would kill me to put it on again."

"Come, child, let me do your hair," said Agnes, who had paid little heed to her rhapsody.

"No, I'll go in and loosen it a little, and try to let it shade my face. I'm not looking ill enough to repel a young person, am I, Agnes?" she added, anxiously.

"There'll never be one to look sweeter and finer and more like the tip-top quality," asseverated the nurse, stoutly. "But ye mustn't tire yourself, dearie; whatever ye do, don't get tired."

Marian promised, and ran off to her room, shutting behind her the sliding-doors, and, at the last moment, look-

ing back between them to reassure anxious Agnes with a caressing smile.

Hardly had she vanished from the scene when a step was heard on the landing, followed by a knock, and Agnes opened the door to Jack Adrian.

"Oh, Mr. Adrian, it's as welcome as flowers in May ye are," exclaimed the nurse, joyously. In his manly and prosperous presence she promptly forecast relief from her poignant anxiety to make their livelihood assured.

Jack came in gravely, a line across his brow, looking about him as if dreading to meet what might be awaiting him.

"Agnes, this is a distressing story Miss Thurston has brought me from Dr. Cotesworth," he said, in an undertone. "Where is she?"

"In yonder," signaled Agnes. "Yes, it's sad, sir; but you'll not think, to look at her now, how sad it has been. But she's like one made young again by the news of your coming. If only she could have a mind at rest, sir, I believe she'd get a new chance at living."

"Why was not I informed of her illness?" he asked. "Surely I should have known. I, not you, should have borne the burden. She should never have dropped to this."

"She had promised ye, sir, that ye should never hear of her again, and my poor lady always kept her word."

"True, but I never meant to hold her to that pledge. Agnes, your child is down below, in the carriage. She knows nothing, suspects nothing, of the real object of this visit. She believes she is coming to rout you out and take you away, to be part of our establishment henceforward. For heaven's sake, advise me what to do with her."

"Fetch her up, sir, and let nature point the way."

"I am afraid she ought to know about her mother," he said, moodily.

"I think so, sir. It's the one that suffered birth pangs for her to live," answered Agnes. "And so good, so

patient, so high-minded and brave. Believe me, Mr. Adrian, your wife will never be ashamed to own my poor darling for her mother."

"I know, I know," he hastened to say; "but Gladys is so bright and girlish still. Our honeymoon has never waned. It has been a dream of joy."

"Ye can't shut out sorrow, Mr. Adrian, from any woman's life. And Gladys, like her mother, was made to bend, not break."

"I'll go for her," he said, resolutely. "Do you tell the mother we have come."

His turn of the door knob was met by that of Gladys on the other side. She ran in, beaming, and fell on Agnes's neck.

"If you two think I mean to stop down stairs and play royalty on its rounds a moment longer!" she exclaimed, radiantly. "Jack knew that the greatest treat he could give me, on the first day, was to come over here and capture you, nurse darling! Now you're ours from this day forth—you're going to darn our stockings and keep those piles of bridal linen in the most splendid order, and generally 'boss' our maids. Isn't that a career for you, old thing? Answer and say you're glad."

In this merry hectoring, in the birdlike movements of the speaker's head, in the loving imperiousness of her manner, Agnes felt that the mother was repeated.

"I'll be back in a minute," she said, vaguely, disappearing.

Gladys, a little taken aback at the nurse's abrupt exit, attributed it to emotion over their reunion. In the interval of waiting she fluttered like a butterfly about the room, handling its belongings with the freedom of a petted juvenile.

"What a lot of lovely flowers Agnes has, and how well she's learned to group them! I recognize that old china cat and dog on the mantelpiece, Jack. I bought them for her at a fair, ages ago, when I was eight. This old workbox, too, that I was never allowed to play with! I won-

der I dare touch it now. These shells—old servants always run to shells—I used to put them to my ear, like this, and listen—listen for the voice of the sea she told me I could hear. Oh, what old frights of photographs! Is there anything so subduing to one's pride as to come upon one's former self, with whom one was so satisfied? Here I am, in all ages and stages—on a rock by an imaginary lake, on my donkey, riding on a bough, and in my first ball gown. Oh, horrid little thing! how you simper!" and merrily she turned the offending face to the wall.

"Here's a picture I never saw before, Jack," she exclaimed, suddenly, pouncing on a faded photograph in a frame surrounded by china forget-me-nots. "Agnes must have had it hid away—but why? Jack! *I've* seen this woman! Awfully pretty she must have been, in spite of that funny hairdressing and gown. Tell me, dear—you know me better than I know myself—where have I met her, recently? Not a round and dimpled face, youthful and smiling like this, but thinner, paler, with the eyes full of unshed tears. Jack, dearest, something goes out from my heart to her—I know not what—"

"Gladys, my sweetheart," said Adrian, strongly moved, "doesn't that something tell you you are looking at your mother?"

"Then why have they never shown it to me before?" she cried. "Why have I been always told there was no likeness of her in existence?"

"My darling, it was thought best to keep you in ignorance. The circumstances under which you and your mother parted were not ordinary ones—they were very, very sad. The knowledge would have darkened your young life. Your father could not bear to have her alluded to. She offended him, and he never forgave her."

"What do you mean?" she said, withdrawing herself from his arm-clasp, and blushing deeply.

"Gladys, your mother did not die. She was separated by law from your

father, and went to live far away from him. She is living still."

"But I have seen her, spoken to her, I tell you," she said, bewildered. "Oh, why doesn't it come to me when and how?"

"My own wife," said Adrian, again drawing her to his heart, "you need all your self-control, for you are about to meet the poor lady whose life since she gave you up has been everything that is true and noble. It was not your nurse, but your mother, whom I brought you here to see—your mother, who has been dangerously ill, and is still in the most pitiful condition. All we can do, darling, won't be enough to make up to her for what she's suffered here."

He felt her heart beat wildly against his own; felt the tremor of intense feeling that shook her frame, her hands fluttering in his like prisoned birds. But speech from either was arrested by the sliding back of the middle doors in their grooves. Marian, clad all in white, a sweet, piteous look in her eyes, the rose bloom of girlhood returned to her cheeks, held out her arms to Gladys, who flew to her embrace.

"It was you, mother, who came to me on the day before my wedding?" asked the girl, presently, when she sat close by the chair into which Marian had dropped, weak from emotion, but happy beyond all words.

"Yes, my own love; I could not resist it. It was rash, foolish, unforgivable, perhaps, but the only way to see and touch my child."

"And *you* sent this chain and pendant I always wear? See! I have it on now, and Jack has never pretended to be jealous."

"Yes, yes?" said Marian, eagerly.

"Often and often have I thought of you, and not even to Jack have I spoken of the strange thrill your touch gave me."

"My child, my little one, joy of my heart!" murmured the mother in her ear, "in this moment I'm living all the years I've missed from you; but we won't think, won't speak, of what is gone. It's the fu-

ture—the bright, glorious future—that concerns us. To think that——”

Her words seemed to trail, then stopped abruptly. Her head fell back, her hand clutched at her heart.

“Jack! Agnes!” cried Gladys, in terror, “come to her!”

Agnes and Adrian, who had withdrawn out of earshot of mother and child, hastened to Marian’s aid. The experienced eye of the nurse saw at once that the present attack differed in some respects from those preceding it, and it was with a feeling of enormous relief that she was called to the door to admit Dr. Cotesworth, whose arrival had been deferred until this momentous crisis of affairs.

Adrian, who believed Marian to be dying, was torn between his desire to remove Gladys from the painful scene and his conviction that her place was by her mother’s side. He therefore welcomed appreciably Cotesworth’s prompt suggestion that his patient, on recovering from what might probably prove a rather more obstinate attack than usual of a familiar malady, would be far better left alone in his hands and the nurse’s.

So Gladys, yearning to remain, was carried off by Jack, her final act being to kneel beside her mother’s fainting form and fondly kiss her hand. It needed all of Dr. Cotesworth’s authority to convince her that this sudden close of an opening chapter of delight was not, of necessity, a last farewell. Her plaintive and girlish assurance that she would trust all to him rang in the physician’s ears, and returned to him again and again during his efforts to snatch poor Marian anew from the jaws of the grim enemy, who seemed ever to await her, hungering.

“Why didn’t you let me go?” Marian asked Cotesworth, as he watched her again struggle back into life and a sense of its realities. Her old whimsical impetuosity of manner gave him cheering reassurance that it was her very self whom he had regained. He answered her with a smile, repeating what she had bid him keep to himself forever.

“Oh, I meant because it was all just right then, and it can never be right again,” she said, hastily. “I have tasted a supreme delight, and Gladys thinks she has recovered a lost treasure. But now that they have got me back, what in the world can Jack and my darling do with me? This old trump of an Agnes would rather starve with me than leave me to go live in their luxury. You, the best and truest friend woman ever had—I’m blighting your career, and what you wanted me to do would have brought down on you all the thousand tongues of scandal. The plain truth is, I’m a problem, a superfluity, a block in everybody’s path—nobody can *afford* to indulge in me. My death would set everything straight! You who have forced me to live, tell me what’s to become of me? You are very clever, Dr. Cotesworth, very big and positive, and sure of yourself; but if you lived a thousand years you could never solve that riddle, and you needn’t try.”

“Nonsense! That’s just what I mean to do,” he answered, in a burst of such honest masculine conviction that a flicker of the old fun came into her eyes, to be followed by a gush of grateful tears.

Was what he wished, and Agnes wished with all her loyal old heart, ever to come to pass? They thought so, but already Marian’s higher self had decided otherwise.



A REFORMED MAN

OLD GENTLEMAN—So you want to marry my daughter? Do you drink?
YOUNG MAN—No, sir; I signed the pledge just before I left home.

À LA MORTE

THE dead man lay with his face to the sod,
 As a fallen clod might lie,
 When the morning broke in a line of gold
 Through the gray of yielding sky;
 And the soaring lark sang clear and high,
 And a tremulous wind and new
 Ruffled his hair as it passed him by,
 As a tender hand might do.

The dead man lay with his face to the sod—
 A thing that had ceased to be,
 For the little sake of a taunting boast
 And a whisper over-free.
 Dear God, thy pity for such as he,
 Who had known, were it not for this,
 His children's prattle about his knee
 And a woman's lips to kiss.

McCREA PICKERING.



HADN'T USED IT

HE—Do you return my love?
 SHE—Yes; and I think you'll find it as good as new!



THE MEAN THING!

MISS PLAINLEIGH—He said he couldn't help kissing me.
 THE OTHER ONE—You ought to be ashamed of yourself!



LOVE À LA MODE

THE flawless friends are happy to acquaint
 Me with your many faults in long complaint;
 They marvel at my blindly loving you—
 Am I an angel to deserve a saint?

Pale perfectness is far from you, I wis,
 Yet all your sins I smilingly dismiss;
 They do not touch the still place of your soul,
 Nor dull for me the keen joy of your kiss.

JOHN BARKER.

THE CHAPERON

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

THE chaperon said to the débutante,
As she saw in the doorway a black coat hover:
"Remember, my dear, that the words of an aunt
Are truer oftentimes than the vows of a lover.
And however sweetly a man may plead
For tête-à-tête talks and walks together,
You must grant him no favors and pay him no heed
If you would hold him with love's safe tether.

"For a well-bred maiden should never allow
Even her hand to be pressed by kisses,
Until the clergyman hears the vow
That turns by a letter the Miss to a Mrs."
So the chaperon spoke; and then, like a flash,
In the curious way that the mind gets started
On a sudden journey, unwise as rash,
Her thoughts flew back to a night departed.

And far and away from the great town's glare,
And far and away from the world of fashion,
She was snuggled again in the old chintz chair,
Held close by the strong young arms of passion.
Off in their chamber the old folks slept,
With a peaceful trust in the man and maiden,
Who, heart to heart, in the firelight kept
Their watch with the moments rapture-laden.

By the Autumn winds that the tall trees stirred
Alone was the eloquent silence broken,
For a clinging kiss tells more than a word,
And so in that room there were few words spoken.
She melted into his ardent arms
As a rosebud yields to the sun's embraces—
His world was compassed by her young charms,
And love's great glory lit both glad faces.

She felt no doubt and she felt no fear—
Was he not her lover, her own defender?
And the true heart throbbing beneath her ear
As a man's was strong, as a woman's tender.
The cruel old clock on the shelf tolled on;
Like a startled bird from her nest she fluttered—
But the half-hour struck ere the last kiss was done
And the last and lingering good-night uttered.

Back from her wild, sweet memory jaunt
 The chaperon came, as a voice beguiling
 Said, "May I go out on the balcony, aunt,
 With Jack, to bask in the moon man's smiling?"
 "How lovely your auntie is looking, Maud,"
 Quoth Jack, as he leaned in the moonlight over
 The débutante's shoulder; "and isn't it odd
 A woman like that has had no lover?"



AT A MUSICAL EVENING

MRS. SILLY-BILLY—And your friend over there, does he play on a violin?
 MR. OLE COWE—No; he works on a fiddle.



ENCOURAGING

HE—I suppose it would be improper for me to kiss you on such short acquaintance?
 SHE—Yes; but it is still quite early.



AT MEZRA

IN the shade of the hedge at Mezra,
 When the cactus was in flower,
 We sat apart together
 Through the languid noonday hour.

I was her Arab lover—
 (Of course, it was all in play!)
 And I called her "Star-of-Evening,"
 And I called her "Dream-of-Day."

She—has she quite forgotten?
 Soothly, I do not know
 If ever she dreamily opens
 The volume of Long Ago.

But I—I can still remember
 Her lips like a cactus flower,
 In the shade of the hedge at Mezra
 At the languid noonday hour.

HAROLD MACARDELL.

THE WHIRL OF CHANCE

By Henry Goelet McVickar

THE two men were sitting at a front window of the Benedict Club in Fifth Avenue. The day was cold and blustering, and Spring seemed afar off.

"Look here, Eliot," said Ned, "I believe the clerk of the weather is a woman, she changes her moods so often. Yesterday was bright and warm; and now look at this!" and he pointed out of the window. "Let's do the snark act."

"What's that?"

"Why, don't you remember?—'he slowly and silently vanished away.' I propose we take a toothbrush and a clean handkerchief and go abroad, 'strange countries for to see.' We can go to London and waste our time, to Paris and waste our health, and to Monte Carlo and waste our substance. What say you, oh, ye silent one?"

"But, my dear man," moaned Eliot, "we have done all that before so very many times."

"I am aware," answered Ned, "that the proposition lacks the charm of novelty, but as compared with sitting here like a 'potted lily in a window,' it has to me great attractions. Will you go?"

"I don't want to, but I won't be left. If I remained here I should commit suicide, and that, I understand, is not considered good form."

"Well," laughed Ned, "that's the first time I ever heard that either bad form or good form interested you. Of all the unconventional men—"

"Here, stop!" interrupted Eliot; "don't talk about me. As a topic of conversation I am flat, stale and unprofitable. Let's look for a steamer."

Both of these men had practically

given up society. Talking to people you don't want to talk to, and listening to people you don't care to listen to, had palled on them. They realized that the lottery of a dinner party is the same as the lottery of marriage, on a smaller scale; only in the one case you choose for yourself, and in the other your hostess chooses for you. So the balls, dinners and routs to come had no fascinations for them.

They fixed on a vessel sailing the following Wednesday. Before leaving, Ned went up to see his aunt, Mrs. Edgerton. She looked a little thinner, perhaps a little sadder, as people must who realize they are reaching that turning in the lane of life around which they have watched so many of their dear ones disappear. When she had heard his plans, she said:

"My dear Edward, I do wish you would cease roaming over the world like a homeless tramp. I do wish—oh, Edward! how I wish you would give up your rooms and come and live here with me. You shall have a floor to yourself. I will have the words 'Liberty Hall' in brilliant gas jets over the front door, to remind you that you are without restrictions. Then, some days, when you feel inclined, you and I could dine together—just you and I." Then a wave of annoyance swept over the old lady's face. She was chagrined at showing so much feeling before even her nephew, and she continued: "There, I take it all back. I don't mean a word of it, my dear. There is no tyranny in the world equal to the unconscious selfishness of old age. It cannot understand why the young

should not prefer the shade of its peevish exactions and unreasoning irritation to the sunlight and laughter of youth and health. The companionship and conversation of the old conduce only to melancholy and thoughts of the tomb. Their overweening sense of duty, coupled with their relentless selfishness, often stunts the love of life in young people."

"Gracious me, Taunta! What a tirade! I never heard you so vicious before. Please remember I am not a young person."

"I was not thinking of you, stupid. You are *sometimes* out of my thoughts," and the kindly light came back into the old lady's eyes as she patted him on the shoulder. Later, he kissed her good-bye and left her standing with her head thrown back so that the tears should not fall. Somehow his talk with his aunt had brought back to his mind the dead girl they both had loved, to have known whom once was to carry a whiff of fragrance through life.

Ned and Eliot found soot-begrimed London hiding its ugliness in a fog, as usual, but Paris held its face up to the sun to be kissed, and the spirits of the two travelers rose in delight at the sight of that dazzling city once more. After a week or two of gaiety they went on to the Riviera, having determined to stop at Cannes, making periodical trips to Monte Carlo rather than living there. As Ned said, "Hell may be an amusing place to visit, but it makes a poor home."

The Hôtel Belle Vue stands on an eminence and looks toward the sea. Flowers were everywhere—great splotches of color on the green—and the palm trees waved their drooping, sword-like leaves almost cheerfully.

Now it so happened that Ethel Winters and her mother were also at the Belle Vue, which fact neither Eliot nor Ned had known. Since the death of Agnes at Aiken, he had seen Ethel only a few times, and then the conversation had been of a most formal and conventional character. He had heard that she had gone

abroad, but of her destination he had no idea. Ethel had discreetly left him alone. She knew that any move on her part while his sorrow was fresh would have been a mistake. It could not be said that she was in love with Ned; but she intended to marry him. He suited her in every way. He possessed money, brains, family and good looks. When his engagement to Agnes had been announced, her life seemed suddenly arrested. She could not understand that anything she had determined to do should become impossible, and when fate released him she only smiled to think she had ever doubted the ascendancy of her own star. She was unquestionably one of the most beautiful women of her day—perhaps not as good as she was beautiful, but certainly as clever.

Her widowed mother was pretty, too, but very, very dull. You could no more have struck a scintillating spark from the brain of Mrs. Winters than from a wet sponge. The two did not dwell in that perfect harmony which should characterize the relations of mother and daughter, but they managed to be fairly good friends without any great admixture of tenderness. Occasionally Ethel's utterances made her mother wince with pain. Then she would reply, "Oh, Ethel! how can you!" and retiring to her room, would weep for hours. One of her peculiarities was never to wipe away her tears; they were absorbed by her lap as the earth absorbs the rain. Ethel, doubtless, was occasionally justified in her strictures, for Mrs. Winters had a knack for saying and doing the wrong thing, and now and again she wrecked some of the girl's most carefully matured plans.

Together they had about seven thousand a year—certainly not very much on which to dress and lead a fashionable life. Mrs. Winters had a devoted slave in Colonel Bentley, tall and erect as a soldier should be, and with an enviable war record. He was universally acknowledged a thoroughbred. He radiated the atmos-

phere of a gentleman. His definition of the word was, one who tried to have a perfect consideration for the feelings of others; and he lived up to it. He had been in love with Mrs. Winters for years. Her stupidity was to him only gentleness; her want of self-assertion, womanliness. He was rich, and perhaps the largest thorn in Ethel's side was that her mother would not marry him and thereby make their sail down the river of life a little less like a trip through rapids in a frail canoe; but her mother's heart was incapable of two sensations in one career. She had had a little tingling love for Ethel's father, which, now that he was dead, had grown to gigantic sentimental proportions. But the old soldier had never been known to give up a forlorn hope; so, in the matter of his wooing, he persisted valiantly.

On the afternoon of the day Ned and Eliot arrived Ethel was in her mother's room, standing near the window. She caught sight of them walking to and fro on the lawn, and she flushed with delight. "Luck is with me," she thought. "Now if mamma could only dematerialize for a month!" She was radiant as she turned to her mother. "Guess who's here, out on the lawn!" she exclaimed.

"Well," said Mrs. Winters, with a somewhat puzzled and frightened look—she disliked being called on suddenly to exercise her faculties, and she feared Ethel's displeasure if she showed a want of acumen—"let me think. Oh, I know! It's your Aunt Susan; she said she might come," and she beamed with satisfaction at the happy thought.

There was a moment's silence. Then Ethel, looking at her mother in a pensive way, said:

"Mamma, how very observant you are! Have you any reason to suppose I should look radiantly happy if I saw Aunt Susan on the lawn?"

Mrs. Winters's face took on a resigned "wrong again" expression, and she was silent. Ethel went up to her room to think. In one short half-hour she had painted a panorama on

the canvas of her mind of exactly what was going to happen, where it was going to happen, and when. She saw a series of pictures distinctly progressive in their character, with Ned and herself the only figures. Men think in words; women think in pictures. What she saw must have pleased her, for she smiled, and going to the mirror, shared the beauty of her face with the glass. In this proceeding she was never selfish.

At dinner that night, as Ned and Eliot entered the dining-room, they spied the Colonel, Ethel and her mother at one of the corner tables. Of course, they went directly over and spoke to them. Ethel looked up with a pleasant but not too enthusiastic smile.

"Why, when did you two arrive?" she said. "I had no idea you were here!"

"Why, Ethel," interposed her mother, "you saw them both on the lawn from my window."

Ethel's lashes fluttered uncertainly for an instant.

"Oh, I thought I saw them, but Mr. Homer and Mr. Thorne look so much like other men—" here she glanced up mischievously—"that I came to the conclusion I was mistaken." By this time both men had shaken hands with the Colonel, for whom they entertained a great respect.

"Do sit down here and share our table," chirruped Mrs. Winters. But this invitation was not seconded by either Ethel or Bentley, for different reasons.

"No, thanks," Ned replied; "we have one engaged already."

After dinner Ethel's mother said to her: "Why didn't you back up my invitation to those two men? I thought at last I had done something to please you."

"If I told you, dear mother, you wouldn't understand; but, if you wish to hear, it was because, if two people are never separated they can never meet; because, when a woman administers herself in allopathic doses to a man, it is only a question of time

until he refuses his medicine; because—" But seeing the hopelessly blank look on her mother's face, she laughed and kissed her, saying, "You're a funny 'itty thing, mamma."

Colonel Bentley's apathy toward the new arrivals was due to the fact that he wanted no rivals near him. The fact that these men could be long in the presence of Mrs. Winters and not fall in love with her never occurred to him. For a man to believe that all the world must love the woman he adores is the greatest compliment he can pay her.

Ethel and Eliot were not sympathetic. Intuitively they disliked each other, as complex and simple natures always do. She knew that the only obstacle in her path was this somewhat silent but loyal and resolute man.

The following morning, the others being occupied by their own affairs, Ned and Ethel took a long walk in the sunlight by the sea, and talked of many things. Not like the carpenter and the walrus, of "shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings," but of books and plays and people. In a conversation between a man and a woman fated to become more intimate there are always three stages: What do you like? Whom do you like? Do you like me? They had gone back to the first stage.

If there were no more real progression in a railroad train than there is in the conversation between ordinary people of the present day, a vast amount of time would be spent switching back and forth before the same station.

She was saying: "Of making many books there is no end, I grant you; but what I object to is their length. I resent the assumption on the part of the author that the reader has no intelligence. He *may* have a reasonable amount, so why not indicate rather than describe? By his over-elaboration an author will take four hundred pages of printed matter to tell you a story that could be told in two."

"I quite agree with you," said Ned. "I believe that in the coming years our novels will be almost telegraphic in style; a framework will be given, and each reader will fill up the spaces for himself. Then the book will borrow some of the reader's individuality, and much of the pleasure will be in comparing notes and marking how differently one book may affect many people."

"I don't like Smith's books," Ethel went on. "His men are all so insincere and such moral cowards! I like men who have the courage of their convictions; who, if they love a woman, glory in the fact, and glory in telling her their love, and who don't analyze and sift and ponder and query till what is left of their feelings wouldn't feed the heart of a mouse. I despise them!"

The conversation now advanced to the second stage.

Presently Ned said: "It seems so natural to be chatting with you again, Miss Ethel, so natural and so delightful. We were very good friends at one time, were we not?"

"Oh!" laughed Ethel, "I remember you quite well. There is something very familiar in your voice."

Ned looked pensively out at the sea. "I believe you liked me a little bit in those days," he said.

"Well, of all the bold effrontery!" gasped Ethel, secretly delighted. "However, whatever I thought or did not think in those days, they were those days, and these are these days."

"Don't repeat that sentence again, I beseech you, or I shall have vertigo."

The conversation now progressed to the third stage, where it remained.

Ned was unquestionably pleased to be talking once more to a bright, clever woman, one whom he imagined understood him. When a man thinks he is thoroughly understood by a woman, not as he is but as he believes himself to be, his legs are already dangling over the precipice of love.

Meanwhile, Colonel Bentley was

making an unusually late toilet. He had the previous evening made one of his periodical offers of hand and heart to Mrs. Winters. The heart and hand had been saturated, as usual, with the lady's ever ready tears, and then gently declined. Mrs. Winters was quite unconscious that, without the Colonel's regular declarations and proposals, her life would have been a vacuum.

The Colonel had one peculiarity. He believed in an *alter ego*. His was to him a real personage, and he hated him. He attributed any failures he scored to the asinine and sometimes wilful stupidity of this other self. The unkindest things he ever said of anyone he said of himself. Looking into the glass one day, he tapped his chest significantly, and remarked, slowly and deliberately: "There are two people living in this shell, and one's a damned fool."

Sometimes the Colonel, when dressing for dinner, would get to thinking deeply, and presently find himself prepared for bed instead. This experience always made him passionately angry. He never attributed it to absent-mindedness, but would mutter: "Some people would call this force of habit; it's nothing but the fool side of me making another mistake." This morning he was particularly annoyed, as he attributed his failure of the night before to his abruptness. His *alter ego* had suggested to his mind that if he should ask Mrs. Winters suddenly to be his wife, she might say yes before she thought; but, instead of his proposal having this effect, he had succeeded only in startling her, and he had spent the rest of the evening watching the drip, drip of her tears. At the present moment he was pinching his biceps and muttering: "That arm is as good as it was fifteen years ago, when it knocked three men down in a minute, while as for these legs—" and he slapped his limbs with satisfaction—"they can walk their twenty miles with any younger pair in Cannes." Then, with a glance into the glass: "And I'm not so very

ugly, after all. Why is it? Why won't she say yes?" And though no answer came to these questions, the Colonel felt better for them, and left his room ready and willing to try again.

That afternoon everyone in the party appeared in great good spirits. The Colonel had been, as usual, encouraged by his defeat. Ethel liked the appearance of her prospects. Ned had ceased to analyze and was childishly happy, and Mrs. Winters had greatly enjoyed her cry of the night before. Only Eliot seemed quiet.

"Now," exclaimed Ned, after lunch, "I have a suggestion to make! It is that we all take the three o'clock train to Monte Carlo, dine as my guests at the Hôtel de Paris, lose all our money in the evening, spend the night at the hotel, and return in the morning, sadder and wiser, of course, but laden with experiences. Ladies and gentlemen, what is your pleasure? Shall we go?"

The motion was carried by acclamation. Ethel put in her bag the prettiest gown she owned and took every penny she had with her at the hotel, including five hundred francs she had saved to pay a certain bill in Paris. Ned had been to Monte Carlo before, and on their arrival he placed a thousand-franc note in an envelope and put it in the safe of the hotel. This *billet de mille* he would not touch himself, nor would he lend it, so there was always something for expenses and something with which to get home.

In the afternoon they played roulette a little. It was interesting to watch Ethel. She had never gambled before. At first she risked only five francs on the colors, and frequently won. Ned gazed at her with an amused expression. At last he whispered to her: "Look and see what the number of your check is, the check they gave you in the anteroom for your cape." Ethel obeyed, and answered, "Fourteen."

"Very good; now put ten francs on fourteen *en plein*." Ethel did so.

There was a moment's wait, then the little ball whirled round the circle, clattered and clattered, stopped, changed its mind and went ahead, until Ethel thought it would never rest, then an instant later dropped into a compartment. In a dreamy, metallic voice the croupier cried: "*Quatorze, rouge manque et pair.*" He pushed off the top five-franc piece, to see that there were two, and then, counting out three hundred and fifty francs in paper, pushed them over to Ethel with his rake. While he was doing this an old lady with wrinkles on her face like the canals in Mars, who sat opposite, stole the ten francs on fourteen, but Ethel saw, and turning to the croupier, said, "Those are mine." He looked up at the old lady, glanced at her pile of five-franc pieces, on the top of which she had just placed Ethel's, and knocking it down, raked off two and pushed them over. All this without a word of apology. The old lady did not seem to be indignant, muttered something in French about a mistake, and restored her pile.

Ethel beamed with delight; her eyes sparkled, and a bright red spot came to each cheek.

"Try it again, same number," whispered Ned.

She obeyed, and fourteen repeated.

"Now come away and be satisfied," and he led her from the crowd around the table out into the vestibule, still clutching her winnings. As for being satisfied, she had discovered a new sensation, and one that gratified her more than any she had ever experienced.

As luck would have it, they all won a little that afternoon, and there was no merrier party at dinner in all Monte Carlo that night. Everyone about them seemed merry, too. It was the high carnival of the senses, of music and flowers, of beauty and wine and gold. The virtues took wings; the vices seemed irresistibly attractive. The women were like Bacchantes, drunk with avarice—with the greed of gold, not the greed of purity; they would keep their money,

but with all that was good in them they were lavish.

The men became beasts of prey and looked with daring into the eyes of each beauty as she passed. Oh, the devil dwells in flowered Monte Carlo! Of all the places on this earth he deems it best.

Eliot asked Ethel how she liked the place. "I think it charming!" she answered. "I should like to live here a year."

"I am afraid you would be a somewhat faded flower by that time."

"I would rather lead the short life of a dissipated flower than the long one of a violet lost in the woods."

She regretted this speech afterward, as she saw the disapproval in Ned's eyes, but the fever of the place was in her blood.

"Don't you like it?" she asked Eliot, quickly.

"No," he replied. "Monte Carlo should have a gate like the Alhambra, and over it the inscription, 'Leave all morals behind, ye who enter here.'"

"Well, I think most people do," declared Ned. "They check them with their valises at the railway station, and when they return they get their baggage back intact, but waiting in the place of their morals they find their immorals."

"A basketful of speckled peaches," added Eliot. "No character remains clean here for ten minutes."

"It's the loveliest place I have ever seen," declared Ethel.

"Oh, I grant you that," laughed Eliot. "It's God's own country governed by Satan."

Later in the evening they strolled over to the Grand Hôtel. It was one of those moonlight nights when the sea and the sky think no one sees and blend in a kiss. Ned and Ethel walked together, arm in arm, and he felt the intoxication of her presence more and more. As for Ethel, she would have kissed him had he asked, not from love, but wantonness.

At the Grand Hôtel the noise was even greater, the laughter louder and the music faster, more exhilarating.

Two hours later, while they were seated in the big hall, dense with smoke and the odor of perfumed gowns, Ned sighted an old English friend, Lord Berrick, hailed him and presented him to the others. His lordship's look of astonished delight as he glanced at Ethel was childlike in its frankness.

Just after Berrick had made his bow there was sudden silence, while every eye turned to the door leading from the dining-room, which slowly opened, and the Prince of Altruria entered, followed by some American friends. A look of displeasure crept into his face, then he turned his back abruptly and retraced his steps. Hardened and experienced as he was, the smoke, the noise and the staring eyes were too much for his equanimity.

Berrick joined their party at supper and, unlike an Englishman, made great efforts to be agreeable. His attentions to Ethel became marked, and were accepted by her with all the serenity of a princess accustomed to homage. Strolling home afterward with Eliot, he said:

"That girl is not engaged to either one of you chaps, is she?"

"No," answered Eliot, "but she may be."

"Who? You or Thorne?"

"Thorne."

"But she isn't yet?" persisted Berrick.

"No."

"Then all's fair in love and war," cried his lordship.

"I suppose so," Eliot said, in a tired voice. "In war you're licensed to kill, and in love you're licensed to steal."

It was many hours that night before Ethel could get to sleep. Visions of future happiness floated before her, and as for the day just past, it had been the most delightful of her life. When she had undressed she went to the window and looked up at the inverted "bowl of blue" above.

"Ah, I am happy—happy," she said, and to the sea she added, "so tired, too; as tired as a wave that travels from mid-ocean to the shore,"

then stretched out her superb white arms and embraced a fantasy.

Ned, who had a suite of rooms fit for a king, was asleep in a minute, but Eliot stood long gazing out of the window at the marriage of the sky and the sea, while the moon gave the bride away. All inanimate nature seemed so worthy to be God's handiwork. "Life," thought Eliot, "life was God's saddest thought."

Two days after the Monte Carlo trip Berrick called on the Winters at the Belle Vue. It was easy to see that he was, as he expressed it, "hard hit," but, to again use his own words, though he meant "to have a try," he should "go slow, for these American girls are so devilish clever they see through a man as if he were a pane of glass." Berrick was one of England's richest peers, with a beautiful estate in Surrey. He was jolly and practical and particularly fond of chaff, so when he discovered in Ethel a girl who could excel him in a verbal tourney, his admiration was boundless. For conversation proper, or even improper, he did not care. The mere splintering of thoughts into words called "chat" he also disliked. He had no thoughts to spare, but good, solid, lumbering chaff he delighted in. Ethel had already acquired all there was to know about him—the amount of his wealth, the size of his estate, and that he had a mother of whom he was afraid. She was distinctly fond of Ned, but then one can be fond of buckwheat cakes, and one doesn't let buckwheat cakes stand in the way of one's ambitions; wherefore, she had no intention of permitting Ned to interpose himself between her and the bigger game.

The two made rapid progress that afternoon. Ethel gently led Berrick down the smooth incline of love while keeping her own heart quite cool and fresh. But she was restless; she had something on her mind—there was a fever in her blood—the fever of gambling. She longed to be back at the tables flirting with Chance. She wanted to go alone, that she might be independent as to what she bet and

how long she remained, but as yet she could think of no plan by which to satisfy her newly developed passion. So, notwithstanding her successful afternoon, she was in a captious frame of mind. As she entered the house she was met by her mother.

"What do you mean by flirting with that Englishman while you are receiving the serious attentions of Mr. Thorne?" Mrs. Winters began.

"Serious fiddlesticks! Mamma, please let me manage my own affairs."

"But I don't understand."

"Understand, mamma! When did you ever understand? Gracious heavens, I can't forever hew my way through the morasses of your mind! Most things God never intended you to understand, so why should a mortal try to enlighten you?"

This was one of the occasions when Mrs. Winters felt painfully injured, with reason, and promptly retired to her room, where she wept copiously. Ethel, in the retirement of her own room, viciously stamped her feet, and felt relieved before Mrs. Winters's tears had even begun to flow freely.

That night at dinner Ned told them that he and Eliot were going with a stag party on a steam yacht, to lunch aboard and afterward to play golf. That meant the whole day away, and Ethel smiled. Ned regretted exceedingly that no women were asked, for lately he found things very insipid when she was not present.

The following morning Ethel told her mother she intended to have a day to herself alone; she would take her wheel and have a long ride, perhaps stop out to lunch. Mrs. Winters objected; Ethel, having "noted the objection," made her preparations. It was like Mrs. Winters to fail to notice that when she disappeared on her wheel it was not a bicycle skirt she wore, but a long gown. She rode to the station, left the wheel in charge of a porter and caught the early train to Monte Carlo. She had brought with her the original money she had, the five hundred francs she owed and her winnings. She had saved the ticket of admission she received

on her previous visit, and by simply showing this to the guards at the door she was admitted to the gambling rooms. She was regarded with curiosity, not because she was beautiful—many beautiful women pass through those doors—not because she was alone—unescorted women at Monte Carlo are numerous—but because she was both beautiful and alone, and without sin in her eyes. She went straight to the nearest table and secured a seat.

For an hour she played with varying luck, but at last the fickle god of good fortune tired of her; perhaps something in the way she played nettled him. She pressed her luck when he frowned and became careful when he smiled. Nothing seems to anger him more than this course of procedure, but Ethel did not know this. She lost steadily. When she discovered she had nothing left but the five hundred francs she owed in Paris she determined to go home and save that, at least. As she rose a man next to her threw down a five-hundred-franc note on the red. It won; he left his winnings there. He won again, and also a third time. Still, with tightening lips, she went out, out into the sunshine, out among the flowers, and for a moment a great feeling of thankfulness swept over her.

She took a seat on one of the benches facing the sea and thought—thought of the sea, the sunshine, the flowers?—no, of the man she had left winning. Could she only do what he had done she would be even; yes, ahead. She retraced her steps, going to the same table. She threw down her five hundred francs on the red with a well-affected air of indifference. The ball rolled, then stopped, and the *croupier* cried: "*Vingt-neuf, noir, passe impair.*" The rake shot out, and Ethel's money—the money she owed—was gone.

Slowly, with a white face, she went back to the bench in the garden. No tears came to her eyes; she just looked blankly out to sea. She lowered her gaze, and there in her lap she saw something that looked as if it might

be a drop of the sparkling blue sea before her; it was a sapphire ring on her hand, a ring that Colonel Bentley had given her. She knew that it had cost a thousand dollars. She slipped it off her finger and looked at it carefully, then replaced it, whispering "No." But rising, she walked past the Casino away down toward the Café Riche. On her previous visit she had noticed in this balcony street many jewelry shops, and Ned had told her that the beautiful gems in the windows had been pawned and not redeemed. She peered into many of these shops; finding one that was empty of people except the fat French proprietor, she tremblingly entered. With no hesitation, however, she placed the ring in the great white, pudgy hand of Monsieur Poulie—his nails were polished, if his manners were not—and said:

"I wish to borrow on this. How much will you lend?" He looked longer at her face than he did at the gem; at last, after inspecting the stone through a magnifying glass, he said:

"It ees very good. I veel let you haf a t'ousand francs."

"But, monsieur," Ethel exclaimed, "I know it cost five thousand."

"Ah, yes, in your very rich country people pay very high price, but I veel let you haf two t'ousand, because it is vorth to me a t'ousand francs to see your pritty face."

Ethel turned cold, then hot. Just at this moment the door of the shop opened and two women came in—two women who personated Vice disguised as Virtue. They stared Ethel in the face, laughed, and chatted about her in French so full of slang that she could hardly understand them. One of them, unclasping a necklace, threw it on the counter, crying, in a high treble: "*Allons, Poulie, êtes-vous généreux ce matin?*" There was no escape for Ethel; it was plain she was not buying, she was pawning; she was there on the same errand as themselves, brought there by the same cause. She waited long enough to get her two thousand francs, and then

marched out of the place with head erect, but with a feeling that her self-respect had been well tarnished. She now realized for the first time that she was hungry, so, stopping at the nearest restaurant, she ate, and drank two small glasses of brandy. At first the waiter treated her with deference, but when she ordered the brandy he became more familiar. He thought he knew.

Back to the rooms she went, but this time to the *trente-et-quarante* table, where the gambling is done with cards and only gold and notes may be played.

What can equal the cruelty of cards? Though Ethel did not understand the game, she placed her money on the even chances, and remained till her last franc was gone. Then, with two purple shadows beneath her eyes, she went her way home.

A great stillness seemed to have settled upon her. The tension and the excitement of the last few hours changed to a sort of numb tranquillity that was like peace. She was unspeakably weary.

She excused herself from dinner that evening on the plea of a headache. All that night she slept and dreamed she saw the ball whizzing round, and the cards falling from the deft fingers of the croupier while she won untold thousands.

In the morning came the question of the ring; she had always worn it; its absence would surely be noticed, and her imagination failed her for a suitable lie. What her mother would think, she cared little; what Colonel Bentley might think, she cared much; but what Ned would do she feared most. During the day a large basket of flowers was brought to her from Ned, with a line saying: "I am dreadfully puzzled—I have seen people this morning who chatted and laughed as if they enjoyed life, while you lie ill; I cannot understand it. There may be fools who can live without you; I can't."

At another time this would have made Ethel supremely happy, as nothing brings such happiness as gratified

ambition, but to-day no light came to her eyes; the note simply intensified her desire to get her ring back and in some way retrieve her fortunes.

Berrick also sent flowers, with a characteristic line. "Until now the longest day I ever passed was when my *pater*, just to scare me, refused to pay my gambling debts, but this *aujourd'hui* has been an eternity of light without beginning, middle or end. Make haste and get well, or I shall become so thin as to need a new wardrobe." Nor did this make Ethel smile; her one cry was: "Oh, that yesterday had never been!" All day long she lay in bed buffeting her brains, hoping a solution to the problem confronting her, but in vain.

Her mother came in during the morning, and Ethel, with the first feeling of shame she had ever experienced, slipped her left hand under the covers. Always in the past whatever she may have done had met with the endorsement of her brain, if not of her conscience.

"My dear," Mrs. Winters said, "what is the matter? You seem so haggard and worn, you look like those gambling women we saw at Monte Carlo." But Ethel did not answer; turning her face to the wall she feigned sleep.

Late that night there was a terrific thunderstorm; it sounded as if the gods were pounding out another day with mortar and pestle; the wind swept the house—swept it with no duster of feathers, but with a broom of stiff bristles—and Ethel lay listening with wide-open eyes. At last, about two o'clock, she determined to go to her mother's room and get some brandy to steady her nerves. Mrs. Winters wakened as she came in.

"Mamma dear," Ethel said, "where do you keep your brandy?"

"I hide it at the bottom of my trunk," she replied. "These French people would sell their souls for it. Don't take too much, dear. I heard of a man once who meant to take a sip of brandy from a bottle, but he never put it down till it was finished."

Here she yawned, and added, in a sleepy voice, "Then he died."

Ethel hardly heard her. By the light of a candle she was rummaging with her ringless left hand in the bottom of the trunk. At length she found something that felt like a flask wrapped in paper, and closing the lid quietly, retraced her steps to her room. Locking the door, she unwrapped the parcel, and sure enough, there was Mrs. Winters's five francs' worth of brandy—lying on top of her twenty-five thousand francs' worth of letter of credit. Mrs. Winters guarded one as carefully as the other, for her ideas of the relative value of things were a trifle peculiar. The confusion of the little with the great was a habit she shared in marked degree with her sex.

Ethel drank a little brandy with tepid water, and waited for the glow to come. As she sat idly gazing at the credit, her quickened thoughts reverted to the occasion of its issue. She remembered the lugubrious tones of her mother's voice as she had said: "Make it out in my daughter's name as well as mine. Life is so uncertain. I might be ill, I might die—" here a few gentle tears—"and I want it so arranged that in such a case she may be able to draw money in my place." Ethel's hand darted to the paper and tore it from its blue envelope. Her memory was verified. She could draw money as well as her mother. The credit was intact, they had drawn nothing against it as yet; the money they had changed into English notes and gold had brought them as far as Cannes.

Ethel was no mere girl, but a woman, a daring woman, who had always been compelled to think for herself. Had her lines fallen among the larger affairs of life she would have been equal to any occasion. Her methods were always a direct cut to the end she had in view, and she no more saw what menaced the path to this end than one sees the inside of a telescope when looking at a longed-for haven.

She sat thinking for a long time, or rather watching pleasant pictures

pass with bewildering rapidity before her mind's eye. They were as grateful to her senses as ice to a fevered patient. At last she rose, and slipping the envelope beneath her pillow, crept into bed and straightway went to sleep. To have seen her as she lay there with parted lips, "her mouth like a rosebud filled with snow," one would have thought that, of all women, God alone had made this one; that the others had been fashioned by apprentices.

The next day she again escaped from her mother, went to Monte Carlo, drew some money, and lost it. She went back to the bank three times, until all was drawn. Of course, she had intended to use but a very little of the money; had she not always pictured herself winning? People never intend to be as bad as they may prove to be; unruly circumstances force them to extremes. During all this day she never permitted herself to stop and think once; she had an end in view, and on it all her faculties were centred. Only afterward, when too late, did she realize that at one time she had actually been sufficiently ahead to retrieve her ring and replace the money she had lost before. At that moment of fortune, winning had seemed easy, and all her impulse was to gain more. Of course, her playing had attracted some little attention, but fortunately no Americans she knew were present. One can lose \$2,600 at Monte Carlo without greatly interesting the crowd. When Ethel had lost this sum, true to her natural predilection for the direct cut, she had gone to the *trente-et-quarante* table and bet the limit, 12,000 francs—and lost.

Ethel quitted the room a trifle pale, but otherwise looking her best. There were twenty minutes to wait before her train left.

"How interesting this is!" she said to herself, as she strolled about; "hitherto I have been simply a pretty woman, now I suppose I am a criminal—something to be known as 'No. 99, first tier, turn to your right.'" She laughed a little, hard

laugh. "But can one steal from one's mother? Doubtless the law will say yes, but the law," she sneeringly added, "is the most finite and foolish conception of man."

Before long she entirely regained her self-possession. On the previous occasion it was in great part the novelty of her situation that frightened her, but now that she had become accustomed to the burden she had taken on her shoulders, to the serious nature of her position, she was quite calm, almost indifferent, and her mind, instead of being clouded as before, was as clear as one of those bright Spring days when there seems no limit to the vision. She saw herself plainly out of her difficulties, looking back on this experience as merely something that must be forgotten. Not that she had discovered a way out as yet, but she was confident of finding one. In the past her desire seemed always to be followed by attainment, with only a little time intervening between the operation of her mind and the event. As she rattled home in the train she murmured to herself, "If I were another woman I should pray to something or somebody to help me, but what's the use? The angels must be so tired of watching mortals do wrong, and then of being appealed to for assistance! Bah! I'll rely on myself."

Alighting from the train, she determined to walk home. Luckily, she was some distance from the station before she met Berrick, looking all that roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and bitter beer can make a man.

"Where have you been?" he cried, delightedly. "One day you are ill in bed, making the world wretchedly unhappy, and the next you are promenading, a revelation of health."

"Aren't you a little conceited?" Ethel said.

"How so?"

"Only because you speak of yourself as 'the world.' I am sure no one else was wretched on my account."

"Heavens!" replied Berrick, "you should have seen your mother; her eyes looked like boiled crabs."

"Don't be impolite."

"I take it back. And then Thorne—why, he looked like a departed spirit; at least, his spirits had departed. Ha! ha!"

"How very English!" Ethel commented, demurely.

"What is?"

"Your joke."

"Now you're making fun of me," said Berrick, "and I never could understand American wit. It all seems over before it begins. But really, I was anxious to see you and ascertain if you are going to follow the yacht race to-morrow between the Prince's yacht *Dolphin* and Amory's *Juanita*. You can get Thorne to make his friend with the steam yacht take you."

"How are you going?" Ethel asked.

"Oh, I go with the Prince on his boat."

"Really? do you, indeed? Well, I think I'll go on the *Dolphin*, too."

Here Berrick vibrated and made noises to be likened only to a bass viol suffering from earthquake. He was laughing.

"But," he explained, "the Prince wouldn't take a woman on his yacht to-morrow for a thousand pounds."

"Really?" said Ethel, looking interested and surprised, "and he so hard up?"

"Oh, come now, you must not make fun of him; he's a Prince, after all."

"Well, you see," Ethel answered, "there are so many princes in my country that we speak of them familiarly. Why, every third man I know is a 'prince of good fellows.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Berrick, with a look of superiority, "but they're not real princes."

"No," answered Ethel, in a tired voice, "they're only real men."

Berrick had made use of three words that had a wonderful fascination just now for Ethel. "A thousand pounds," he had said; a thousand pounds—just the sum she had lost. There was a purpose in her eyes as she asked:

"And how would you like to wager

a thousand pounds that I don't sail on the Prince's yacht to-morrow, if not during the whole race, at least for a part?"

"My dear Miss Winters," said the Englishman, "it's impossible. You don't know him. It's too late to arrange a presentation, and he would not take you if we could."

"I asked you," repeated Ethel, "how you would like to wager."

Berrick was quiet for a moment, and then said, with a smile:

"I can't lay a thousand to a thousand with a woman, but I will lay that sum with you to a——"

"Speak out!"

"To a——"

"'Faint heart,' you know."

"Well, to a kiss."

Berrick blushed, and so did Ethel, but she looked up into his face and cried:

"Done with you, sir!"

He was staggered for a moment. Then he almost roared:

"Oh, but you American women are immense! Simply immense!"

Ethel dismissed him and hurried home, busily thinking.

Berrick walked home by the Croisette in great good humor, and talking to himself in a loud voice.

"I'll have that kiss, by Jove! and it won't cost a penny!" he exclaimed, confidently.

He thought as little of the French people whom he passed as they, in a different sense, thought of him.

Ethel pondered the situation the rest of the afternoon. "Can I manage it? Have I the pluck?" she asked herself repeatedly. She had made up her mind to win the wager at all hazards and to take the money. She did not choose to calculate as yet what it would cost her in the proprieties, or worry over what Berrick might think. "After all," as she summed it up, "I am simply risking my reputation to save my reputation." In her heart she largely depended on the fact that Berrick was a gentleman and wouldn't tell, however great the temptation; at any rate, no matter what should happen, the money must be obtained.

During the last two days Ned had failed to take advantage of many opportunities to commune with himself. Somehow the analysis of his feelings for Ethel afforded him no pleasure. It is sometimes more difficult to be honest with ourselves than to be so with others. He knew his whole nature was not involved in this situation, and he also knew, though he declined to admit it, that it was the best part of him that was left out. He had made up his mind to gratify himself, if possible, and let regret and remorse follow after, if they needs must. Many men have little strength to resist temptation; they show afterward what strength they have by taking their punishment without cavil or complaint.

That evening at dinner Ethel was gay and resplendent, and Ned felt that the threads of the web woven about him had changed to cables. Only Eliot, as usual, looked solemn. He had worried much in the last two days at the change in his friend. He knew Ned's worth, and he had a very just appreciation of Ethel's character, of her good points as well as her bad. All in all, he felt Ned was about to make the mistake of his life.

In the midst of her merriment Ethel turned to Eliot and said, in a sympathetic voice: "I'm so sorry we have not a bust of Pallas for you to perch on, Mr. Homer; you would feel much more at home."

"Do I remind you of Poe's raven, a bird of ill-omen, Miss Winters?" asked Eliot, coloring slightly.

"Oh, I don't think you portend evil, but I do think it is pleasanter to laugh than to croak."

"Then, in the language of the raven, will I croak 'Nevermore!'"

Homer might have been justifiably annoyed at the young woman's crude sally, but as he intended to have a talk with her shortly, he was too wise to block his own game by getting on bad terms with his opponent.

It was arranged that immediately after dinner Ned should go in search of his friend of the yacht and induce

him, if possible, to take them to witness the race. So when he disappeared Eliot managed to leave Colonel Bentley and Mrs. Winters to their usual proposition, declination and tears—for one of the Colonel's periodical efforts was about due—and to get Ethel to himself on the balcony.

After lighting his cigar three times, when, naturally, once was quite sufficient, he found courage to begin:

"You like our friend Ned very much, do you not, Miss Winters?"

Ethel half-closed her eyes, elevated her chin a little and sat erect.

"'Like' is the word, Mr. Homer. I delight in a man with a masterful command of English—a large vocabulary—so that he invariably uses exactly the right word."

"I thought you might resent the use of the word 'like' as being too paltry to express something greater."

"Careful, Mr. Homer, careful! It is even better to have command of yourself than a command of English. Suppose you begin again."

It is certainly unpleasant, when you are interfering in the affairs of others, to be denied encouragement in your purpose by the unappreciative object of your solicitude. But, being of a straightforward nature, Eliot determined to stop beating about the bush and go to the point.

"What I want to know is——"

"Oh, let me tell you what you want to know," said Ethel, turning and looking him full in the face. "You are the father of an innocent girl asking the villain of the play what his intentions are, and behold, the villain sheds his villainy and says, 'Honorable, oh, worthy sir, honorable!' Now I'm a little cold and a little bored, so let's go in." Then, with a look of touching anxiety, she added: "You'll sleep better to-night, won't you, dear Mr. Homer, knowing your little one is safe?"

This was all the satisfaction Eliot received. Ethel's conversation was fascinating at all times, but after this short interview he felt like a cat that had been a few times round on the

inside of a fly-wheel; the motion was pleasant but a little fast.

Hardly had they returned to the drawing-room when Ned entered, with the information that his friend McEvers would be only too delighted to take them all, and that they must be ready at 10 A.M. sharp on the jetty near the Croisette.

Ethel gave Ned a glance that would have been a sufficient reward had he risked his life in some perilous adventure.

The following morning they were all on time. Ethel never looked better. The day was brilliant, with a glittering sun and a refreshing breeze inspiring to everyone. The yachts were all backed into the protecting pier side by side, like horses ready harnessed in their stalls, their halters heavy chains. A bronzed and bearded sailor, with head upraised, eyed with critical eye and in silence the top gear of his heart's delight, while alongside two Frenchmen pushed off in a row-boat with such noise, conflicting orders and apparent importance as might have accompanied the despatch of an Atlantic liner. There was bunting everywhere. Party after party drove up with a loud cracking of whips.

The French *cocher* knows there are no whips in heaven, and so religiously improves each shining moment here below.

Presently the Prince arrived with Berrick, and the two immediately descended into the cabin of the *Dolphin*. Just before the gangplank was taken in Berrick rushed up with dancing eyes and whispered to Ethel, "I shall win my bet!"

"'Bide a wee,'" she called after him as he disappeared.

Then tugs came, and the racers were towed out to the starting point.

Mrs. Winters was twittering with excitement, while the Colonel danced attendance with all the agility of youth and with that thoughtfulness for her comfort which comes only from experience and a knowledge of one's charge.

The little steamer, called the *Win-*

some, which they were aboard was an auxiliary, not very fast, but speedy enough to keep the racers in view. They steamed out on the bediamonded blue water and watched the two yachts as they slowly circled about, waiting for the gun.

"They look like black swans with white wings," Mrs. Winters said, but when reminded that they were yachts, not freaks of nature, she looked hurt and was about to part with a tear or two when the loyal Colonel rushed to the rescue and assured her that the simile was perfect; he had never thought of it before, but should never see yachts again without being reminded of it.

At last they saw a puff of smoke and heard the belated boom of the cannon, which, when one is at a distance, seems always to have started late and to be trying to catch up. The yachts swung round as if on pivots and glided over the line with scarce three seconds between them. They were to go three times round a certain triangle that had been marked off by stakeboats. At the second turn the *Juanita* got too far under the lee of the land, and in going about missed stays. This gave the *Dolphin* a long lead. When they rounded the last stakeboat and squared away for the home run, the *Winsome* was the nearest boat to the *Dolphin*, being hardly an eighth of a mile ahead and just a little to leeward. Mrs. Winters had suggested a number of times that, as she was starving, she would like to go below and have a bite, and to everyone's surprise, Ethel, who was, for a woman, keen in matters of sport, seconded the motion. The men, who would have preferred to see the finish without an interruption, had no choice. When they were all seated and lunch well started, Ethel rose and complained that the motion, unnoticeable on deck, was too much for her—a statement somewhat at variance with her high color. She would go on deck for ten minutes, she said, and though each man offered to accompany her, she made it plain that she desired to be alone.

On reaching the deck she tiptoed forward, and to her delight found the crew at dinner, with only one man on the lookout, and he sat gazing ahead, while the captain in the pilot-house could not see aft unless he thrust his head out of one of the windows. She glided back to the cockpit, and taking up one of the cushion seats from a long rattan chair, felt carefully its contents, and smiled. On a previous trip on the yacht, McEvers had told her that all the chair seats and backs were padded with cork, so as to be useful as life preservers if needed, and the knowledge of the fact had been a source of great comfort to her since she had matured her plan. Looking stealthily about, she crept to the side, and quietly undoing the white ropes that held the gangway well up from the water, lowered it gently and quietly. She looked up into the nothingness of space, then down into that too liquid water, and shuddered; then she remembered her swimming feats in olden days, and took courage. Grasping the cushion, she descended to the square at the bottom, where she seated herself, letting her feet trail over the edge. It frightened her to find that, though the yacht was apparently going slowly, she yet could not pull her feet back under her. With no prayer but the single comment, "He must needs go that the devil drives," she pushed herself off into the water as far as she could from the side of the yacht, though there was no danger from the screw, which was far below her.

When she rose to the surface not a sound escaped her; she still had hold of the cork cushion, and now that the plunge had been taken, the semblance of fear left her, and she became steady and immensely amused. Away went the *Winsome*, growing smaller and smaller, and on came the *Dolphin*, just a little to windward of her, with spinnaker and every stitch of canvas set and drawing.

While the racer was still well away Ethel uttered a long, penetrating scream, then watched. There was no indication that she had been heard.

She could not see the deck of the yacht, as it was screened from her by the bellying sails. For a moment fear returned to her heart. The *Winsome* was now too far ahead to hear her. She screamed again, and a look of intense relief swept over her face as she heard a hoarse bellow in answer from the lookout on the *Dolphin*. He had just spied her. Rushing aft, he cried:

"Man overboard!"

The Prince and Berrick grabbed their glasses and ran forward with the lookout.

"There he is, just a point off the lee bow, my lord," said the sailor, to Berrick.

The Prince already had his glasses to his eyes.

"I see him," he cried.

"So do I," said Berrick.

"Why, Berrick, he's got long hair! By Jove, it's a woman!"

"My God! so it is," exploded Berrick.

"Run aft, won't you," continued the Prince, "and order the yacht kept off so we can pick her up."

The Englishman was aft in a moment.

"Keep her well off, then round to, so we can make the rescue," he cried to the skipper.

"We'll lose a lot of time if we do, my lord; we need all the lead we've got. *Juanita* can run faster than we can," grumbled the skipper.

"I said keep her off," snapped Berrick, quite excited for him.

"The steamer following us will pick him up, my lord."

"Do you understand these are His Serene Highness's orders? Keep her off!"

"In with your spinnaker!" roared the skipper. The execution of the order required an incredibly short time; then slowly the long tiller was shoved up, and the *Dolphin* gracefully paid off, Ethel then appearing on the weather bow. The yacht went so far to leeward now that Ethel had another fright; she did not realize the immense distance these superb cutters will shoot. Soon she was alongside;

strong arms caught her, and in another moment she was standing in the cockpit, looking up with a wet but dazzling smile into the faces of the Prince and Berrick.

Ethel actually jumped as the skipper, with a look at her of infinite disgust, roared to his crew:

"Get those jibs to windward!"

The *Dolphin* was still forging ahead, so well had she been managed. Again she squared away, with her spinnaker reset, and running as if she knew there was time to be made up; but alas! the *Juanita* had not been idle, and the distance between the two boats was noticeably less.

When Berrick recognized Ethel he was dumfounded.

"Great heavens, Miss Winters! How did it happen?" he asked.

"Won't you present me?" she said, quietly, and glanced at the Prince. Then, with a grace that, under the circumstances, seemed impossible, she caught the edges of her sopping gown in either hand and curtsied as if in a ballroom. The Prince was delighted, and the admiration that shone in his eyes was lost on neither Ethel nor Berrick.

"It happened in this way," she said. "I left them at luncheon, as the cabin was too stuffy, and went on deck for a breath of air. Finding the cushion of the chair on which I was about to sit covered with cigar ashes, I took it to the side to shake them off. I leaned too far forward—the yacht gave a lurch and—I went overboard. Before I could clear my throat to call for help the *Winsome* was out of hearing, so I waited for you. This is my second cold bath this morning, but the Mediterranean makes a larger tub than I am accustomed to."

The Prince laughed. "Let me get you some brandy," he said, and His Serene Highness had almost his first experience as waiter.

When he disappeared Ethel put her hand on Berrick's arm and whispered: "That is the Prince, is it not?"

"Why, of course it is; have I not just presented you?"

"This is the *Dolphin*, is it not?"

Berrick looked at her in a puzzled way and said:

"Of course; you know it."

"She is sailing that race with the *Juanita*, is she not?"

Here Berrick suddenly looked uneasy and murmured:

"Yes."

"Then," continued Ethel, "I am with the Prince, on the *Dolphin*, during part of the race with the *Juanita*, sailed to-day." And she gave Berrick a significant and triumphant look.

Slowly he sank into a chair by her side. His face was a study as he gasped:

"Do you mean to say you did it on——"

"Here comes the Prince!" interrupted Ethel.

"You must drink this at once, Miss Winters, and then go below," urged His Highness. "I am sorry I have not much to offer in the way of dry clothes, but I have told the steward to give you my cabin. Luckily, the yacht is not stripped for the race, and if you will wear a warm bathrobe I possess, and which is the nearest approach I can make to feminine garb, I shall be only too pleased."

Ethel laughed outright.

"I shall try to make a mascot of myself, and do credit to the *Dolphin*."

"One moment," added the Prince, as Ethel rose to go below. "Shall I signal the *Winsome* to put off a boat for you? We can lie to and put you aboard. They must have discovered your absence, and are looking for you now. Yes, I see her turning—she'll head this way."

"What, and lose the race? Never in the world! Signal them that I am rescued, and not to come near us," and she disappeared.

"Look here, Berrick," asked the Prince, "what kind of air do they breathe over there in the States that makes their women all beauty, pluck and brains?"

"I don't really know, sir. The men breathe the same air, and they don't amount to much."

Berrick did not at all like the turn

affairs were taking. He knew that if the Prince took a notion to have a flirtation with Ethel he should have to retire to the background while it lasted. If Berrick, before to-day, had partially succumbed to the attractions of this marvelously beautiful girl, now that she had won her bet in such a daring fashion he was literally dumb with admiration. Her feat was exactly the sort of thing that would appeal to him most. Not in the slightest degree did it meet with his disapproval. Had his sister done the same thing he would have been the proudest man in all France, and it would have been his stock story for the remainder of his life.

The scene on board the *Winsome*, when Ethel's absence was discovered, was of the liveliest. Mrs. Winters had made one or two ineffectual efforts to jump overboard and lead a search swimming-party, but the Colonel held her firmly by the skirt and whispered encouragement into her ear. Ned was pale and anxious. It was Eliot who first noticed the signals on the *Dolphin*, and, with the captain's aid, translated them; but it was not until Mrs. Winters had been brought close enough to the yacht to enable her to see Ethel smilingly waving that she felt appeased, and it was not until she heard her daughter's voice calling, "Keep off! don't come so close!" that she felt everything was all right. To be told by Ethel to keep away sounded so natural that she became entirely at rest and free to indulge in a few tears that up to this time she had been too busy to shed.

Ethel shortly reappeared on the deck of the *Dolphin*, with her hair done up in a bunch on the top of her head, and wrapped in the Prince's warm flannel bathrobe, which opened just sufficiently to expose her well-rounded throat. She was one of those women who, no matter what they wear, find it more becoming than what they wore before.

All this time the *Juanita* was gaining rapidly. In a run before a free wind she was at her best, while the *Dolphin* excelled in windward work

and reaching. The Prince, however, took little notice of his adversary. He was busy watching Ethel, while Berrick was busy watching him. The skipper alone took careful observations of the progress of the race, now and then glancing at the cause of the delay and muttering under his breath a hearty curse embracing all of the female sex.

Just before the race finished the Prince took Ethel below, leaving Berrick on deck, and going to his state-room, returned with a golden locket with the letter "M" set in diamonds. Putting it in her hand, he said:

"I want you to take this trifle in remembrance of your adventure and the race you've won."

"Oh, but we have not won it yet," said Ethel.

"We cannot lose with you on board," returned the Prince, bowing.

"What does 'M' stand for?" she asked.

"It might stand for 'Mascot,'" he answered. Then, with a fatuous look in his eyes, he drew nearer and added: "And it might stand for 'Mine.'"

"Gracious!" thought Ethel, "what engaging rapidity!" Nevertheless she received and kept the trinket, thanking him prettily.

The race was over and the *Dolphin* won. Had they had a mile further to go the plucky *Juanita* would have carried off the laurels.

When they came to anchor, a boat put off from the *Winsome*, and Ethel, still arrayed in the bathrobe, was returned on board. The Prince whispered to her, as she left: "Send me back my robe. I shall never part with it, nor shall I ever wear it again; it would be sacrilegious."

Poor Berrick also got a chance to whisper, "When may I come and pay my bet?"

"To-morrow," was his answer.

When they reached shore Ethel was bundled into a carriage and driven rapidly home. That evening, however, she appeared at dinner wearing the Prince's locket and looking none the worse for her voluntary bath.

She had not made up her mind how

the thousand pounds she meant to take from Berrick could be turned into a letter of credit that her mother could not distinguish from the old one. "Everything in its proper sequence," was her motto, and though this problem pressed for a solution, she proposed to rest her brain overnight.

While she was dressing for dinner Ned Thorne paced the beach in front of the hotel, thinking earnestly, but with a mind clouded by passion. For a moment on the yacht, when he thought she might be drowned, he had felt anguish so keen as to reveal to him the strength of his feeling for her, and now he was communing with himself to determine whether she should know as well as he. After all, he was going through a mere form, for he knew in his heart that nothing in the world could keep him silent. The old feeling for her that he had known before they met again at Cannes had returned to him, increased in strength a hundred fold.

That night he proposed and was accepted. When he kissed her all doubts flew from his mind. He was confident that anyone who could make him so supremely happy must be a wise choice.

Later he cabled to his dear old Taunta, Mrs. Edgerton, but was rather frozen by receiving her answer in the morning:

"My love to you. So glad you're glad."

Eliot was also confided in, and his only comment was:

"My dear boy, if you have decided and chosen, then all I have to say is that she is the finest woman in the world, and I shall always believe her so."

That night Mrs. Winters was obliged to change her pillow case twice. She could not have told what she was crying about, as the news had made her supremely happy; but happy tears are as wet as sad ones.

Ethel alone slept well. Her fervor of anxiety had passed.

The following afternoon Berrick kept his appointment. He had not

heard the news. Ned was out of the way, as he had gone to Nice to buy his ladylove the handsomest ring he could find. The Englishman had been thinking, too, after his fashion.

"I'm beastly hard hit, don't yer know," he told himself about a thousand times. "Got to do something, old chappie. But oh, Lord! how mad the *mater* will be!" Much of his time during the twenty-four hours had been spent wondering what he could give Miss Winters instead of the thousand pounds, as, of course, he was certain she never would take the money, and that her escapade was due merely to dare-deviltry and a determination to save her wagered kiss. Finding Ethel alone, he began, without any preliminaries:

"Look here, Miss Winters, I'm no hand at talking; I never was; but I do know I'm madly in love with you, and I want you to be my wife."

This was the surprise of Ethel's life. With all her quickness and cleverness she had never dreamed that this man was more than mildly *épris* with her, and knowing how he was situated, she had never, except on that one day they had talked together, given him a serious thought as a possible *futur*. But now how different it all was! Again she regretted "a yesterday." But it was not her method to permit the past to interfere with the future.

Like a flash it all went through her mind—a peer of the realm, a title, three estates, a hundred thousand pounds a year, an unassailable position in London; *versus* a plain Mister, fifty thousand dollars a year, a possible house in Fifth Avenue and an unassailable position in New York. The weaker, as a rule, go to the wall. She was fond of Ned, in a way, but she realized that under the circumstances she could become quite fond of Berrick.

Looking up into his guileless eyes, she said:

"Give me time, Lord Berrick, and you shall have your answer. No, don't go; only be quiet for a moment,"

and she walked to the window and looked out.

She needed time to think what would be the effect of telling him she had accepted Thorne only yesterday. In the meanwhile, Berrick felt immensely encouraged by the fact that she thought of him at all. Whatever he was, he was without vanity.

While Ethel was really at a loss, Berrick was plucking up courage to say something he had determined on previously, provided he found he had a chance to win, and now he began:

"Before you think any longer, Miss Ethel, I feel I must tell you that, should you honor me by deciding to share my name and life, I have a tremendous favor to ask."

"A favor?" Ethel's eyebrows rose and a look of keen interest came into her eyes.

"Yes, one that I think most women would resent granting."

Ethel prepared herself for a big disappointment of some sort.

"I want, if you accept me, to have it a runaway match. You see the *mater* is so fearfully prejudiced against everything American, particularly American girls. Why, she hates everything that begins with 'A,' nowadays, on that account, so before I could get her consent I should have to go to England or she come here and see you, and an awful lot of time would be lost; whereas, if we are married and it can't be helped—well, she's a philosophical old dear, and I'm sure she'd forgive me the moment she saw you. Besides, I hate shows, and if we were married in London there would be a fearful lot of fuss and feathers."

Had Ethel been differently situated it is quite certain he would have endured the show as well as the fuss and feathers; but here was a way out of the only difficulty that beset her, provided he was willing to act as quickly as she was. Besides, how much more respectable to accept a thousand pounds from one's husband than from a mere friend!

"When do you want me to run away?" she asked, as demurely as if

she inquired: "When shall I be ready for the picnic?"

"When?" gasped Berrick. "When? Why—why, now!" he sputtered, and threw out his arms and drew her to him. "This very minute!" he cried; "and God bless you for the pluckiest little woman that ever drew the breath of life!"

"You see," continued Ethel, disengaging herself from his bear-like hug, "my mother is so difficult, too. She wants me to marry Mr. Thorne, and, to be truthful, it is almost arranged. So, unless we run ever so quickly and ever so fast, we'll get into terrible complications."

This bit of news served to make Berrick still more anxious and ready to start.

"Put on your hat! We'll go now!" he exclaimed, quite wild with excitement. "Don't bring a thing with you. We will go to Monte Carlo—that is in the principality of Monaco—and be married. We'll stop at Marseilles to-night, and we can buy everything we need there."

"Yes, dear," murmured Ethel, "we will be married before we go to Marseilles."

Berrick took this as a natural precaution on the part of a pure woman to protect her good name, which, in part, it was; but Ethel also thought it wise to be well riveted before taking any chances.

The whole prospect tickled Ethel immensely. She pictured her mother's horror and surprise, and then her tearful forgiveness on learning the brilliancy of the match.

She felt sorry for Thorne, but as she believed, with much reason, very little in the permanency of men's love, she did not permit this fact to spoil her pleasure. As for Eliot, she longed to see his face when he learned the truth.

They were married that afternoon in the little church at Monte Carlo. After the ceremony Berrick wired his mother: "Been and gone and done it."

"This, don't you know," he explained to Ethel, "will frighten her

to death. She will think I've done something awful, wrecked my life—and when she finds I've simply married the best, the pluckiest, the cleverest, the most beautiful woman in the world, the relief will be so great she'll forgive us both."

Ethel smiled in a superior sort of way, and said: "Don't worry any more about your mother, dear. I sha'n't be a week in London before she will be asking me my opinion as to what is most becoming to her."

Having an hour before the train left, Ethel went to the rectory and wrote four letters, as follows:

DEAR MOTHER: I have run away with Lord Berrick, but I have run away with him as his wife. Please impress this fact on your mind. I have borrowed your letter of credit, as I needed some money to start with, but I shall send you immediately on my arrival in Paris another for the same amount. I have not deserted you for long; for as soon as I have placated Berrick's dragon of a mother I shall send for you to come and visit us. However, I want you, dear mamma, to come to us as Mrs. Bentley. Do marry the darling old Colonel. I think you have kept him in the cold long enough. Don't bother about Ned Thorne—I have written to him. And don't cry your eyes out, for heaven's sake, as there is nothing to cry about.

Yours,
ETHEL.

DEAR MR. THORNE: To ask your forgiveness, just at present, would be useless, I know. Of course, you feel you have been badly treated, and possibly you have; but remember, had I married you I might have treated you worse. It will not be your heart, though you will think so, that will suffer from this blow, but your vanity. You will realize this some day. I don't ask you to forget me; I don't want you to. I propose that in the future Berrick shall be your best friend among men and I your best friend among women, and what I propose, as you know, has a way of coming true. As I say, I don't ask forgiveness, for that is the emptiest and most meaningless word in all the English language.

Yours sincerely,
ETHEL BERRICK.

Here she stayed her pen a moment and smiled before she began the next two notes, which were remarkably short.

DEAR COLONEL: Don't try to think ill of me. You've never been able to do that of anyone; but marry mamma and bring her to London to see Berrick and me, as Darby and Joan.

Yours affec.,
ETHEL.

The next was even shorter.

DEAR MR. HOMER:
I congratulate you. Your little one is safe.

Yours thankfully,
ETHEL BERRICK.

A man to whom no one gave a thought was quite as much disgusted as anyone, and this was the Prince, who had marked Ethel as the woman he meant next to make conspicuous by his attentions; but he well knew how to solace himself.

It need only be added that the plucky Colonel won his suit at last, and a month later Colonel and Mrs. Bentley occupied what was called the King's suite at Berrick Castle. The dear old Colonel never could understand how the sapphire ring Lady Berrick wore seemed so much larger than the one he gave her.

The evening of the runaway, and after Ned and Eliot had learned the news and read their letters, Eliot put his hand on Ned's shoulder and said:

"In my opinion, my boy, you've had a damned narrow escape."

"Thanks!" Ned answered, "but I'll listen to your opinion on the matter ten years hence."

As for the future of the Lady Berrick, as Macaulay says: "We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality."

The Lady Berrick, so far as society is concerned, is said to greatly relieve the monotony of these periods.

THE MANSION

By Bliss Carman

I THOUGHT it chill and lonesome,
And too far from the road
For an ideal dwelling,
When here I first abode.

But yesterday a lodger
Smiled as she passed my door,
With mien of gay contentment
That lured me to explore.

Unerringly she leads me,
Compassionate and wise,
Soul of immortal beauty
Wearing the mortal guise.

She knows from sill to attic
The great house through and through,
Its treasures of the ages,
Surprises ever new.

From room to room I follow,
Entranced by each in turn,
Enchanted by each wonder
She bids my look discern.

She names them: Here is First Love,
A chamber by the sea;
Here, in a flood of noonday,
Great, roomy Charity.

Here is a cell, Devotion;
And lonely Courage here,
Whose child-deserted windows
Look on the Northern year.

Friendship, and Faith, and Gladness,
Fragrant of air and bloom,
Where one might spend a lifetime
Secure from fear of gloom.

And often, as we wander,
I fancy we have neared
The Master of the Mansion,
Who has not yet appeared.

SLEEP

(RONDEL)

SLEEP wanders slowly down night's golden stair,
 Wearing a dream flower on her snowy breast;
 In rippling splendor floats her unbound hair;
 Her eyes in heavenly benediction rest
 Upon the unquiet world, and it is blest.
 Repose profound attends all nature where
 Sleep wanders slowly down night's golden stair,
 Wearing a dream flower on her snowy breast.

Peace enters weary hearts, abiding there
 For a brief space, and at her sweet behest
 Tears flow no more, forgotten is despair,
 As with hushed footfall, on her gentle quest,
 Sleep wanders slowly down night's golden stair.

LILA MUNRO TAINTER.



THE WAY OUT OF IT

HE—It's very confusing at times. The girl I'm engaged to has a twin sister, you know.
 SHE—Well, why don't you get engaged to her, too?



HADN'T SAMPLED IT

SHE—Don't you think I have a good mouth?
 HE—It *looks* all right.



ROMANCE À LA MODE

"I SHALL be at the opera to-night," he wrote. "I can bear the suspense no longer. If you love me, wear a red rose. If I may no longer hope, then let it be a white rose."
 That night she wore a yellow rose.

TEMPERING THE WIND

By E. Gardner Bentley

“OF course, it *is* discouraging,” Mrs. Gale admitted, “but I must be true to my principles, however badly they may seem to work. You needn’t remind me that the Lambs are not paupers. Of course, it is infinitely easier to give out and out to the poor than to help people of your own class, but if nobody else will take any trouble about the Lambs it is plainly my duty to do all I can for them.”

“But those Lambs—” Howard began, in a tone of weary protest.

“Oh, I know everything you are going to say. They are extravagant, they are improvident, they have false pride, they won’t help themselves! I know that Mrs. Travers has lost patience with them, and I’ve heard all about the brocaded opera cloak. All the same, I have a great deal of sympathy even with their absurdities. I have been a poor gentlewoman myself, and I remember what I went through in those dreadful years, thrown on my own resources, with no more idea than a baby how to economize; no profession, no notion of taking care of myself. I made a vow then that if I ever had the means in my power to help anyone, it shouldn’t be the *professional* poor, but people like myself, who hungered for luxuries and thirsted for frivolities. You may call them the ‘unworthy poor,’ if you can find it in your heart to do so, but *you* have evidently never known what it is to have generations of extravagant ancestors hounding you on to spend, and never a penny in your pocket.”

“I never believed in their ancestors myself,” said Howard, the scoffer. “Mother Lamb has spun

me long tales of the glories of her husband’s people, but, on investigation, I found no trace of illustrious lineage. If a repugnance for cheap soap and bad boots reveals the caste of Vere de Vere, then most of us are fallen from ducal state. Besides, they have had, to my certain knowledge, eighteen years in which to take a long farewell to all their greatness. Eighteen years ago last October it was that Mrs. Lamb first fastened her talons on me, and from that hour her hold has never relaxed. She has a grasping claw, has Mother Lamb.”

Mrs. Gale looked uncomfortable. A faint flush rose to the roots of her soft brown hair, that was a little streaked with gray. “I hope—oh, I *hope*—they haven’t been borrowing of you!” she said, anxiously.

Howard threw back his head and laughed loud and long.

“Oh, dear! I might have known it!” sighed Mrs. Gale.

“Bless you, you needn’t fancy yourself the only person who has had the honor of tempering the wind to the shorn Lamb,” he said. “Listen to a true tale, and learn wisdom thereby. Many years ago a greenish young man, with more money than he absolutely needed, descended on New York to establish a law practice, and settled himself at a select boarding-house in Thirty-eighth Street. There was also domiciled a young widow of evident means, with a prattling babe of some two Summers. This lady was not particularly charming, nor was the young man ever in the least enamored of her, which only deepens the mystery of her deadly influence over him; for before he had known her a fortnight, she had managed to

extract from him numerous theatre tickets, not a few suppers to her friends, more temporary loans for cabs and flowers than I like to recall, and finally, an advance on a topaz pin and an outrageous cameo bracelet, of which it humiliates me to think. And, mark you, all this time he never really liked the woman, and he never ceased to believe in her absolute probability. But he was visited by a gleam of sense, and changed his abiding-place before Mrs. Lamb, for reasons not unconnected with arrears in her board bill, changed hers also. Now, it is not to be supposed that, having once tasted blood, the man-eater will not return to its old haunts for more. So has Mother Lamb tracked that young man and made him her periodic prey. His hair is gray, the prattling babe has grown to womanhood, and still the talons refuse to relinquish their hold. I tell you, I respect Mother Lamb. She's a wonderful woman!"

"Everybody respects her—in a way—and poor Isabelle certainly has a great deal of natural distinction," said Mrs. Gale.

"She has, indeed. They levy contributions on everyone, and receive them with the air of sovereigns condescending to accept a loan from their subjects," said Howard. "I lost sight of them for five or six years, and ran across them again at Narragansett. They were fixtures there on account of their hotel bill—the most expensive house at the Pier, of course—so I had to hunt up another friend of the family, a rather disreputable old dandy named Hiller, and together we got them out of pawn. They gave us notes, payable on Isabelle's twenty-first birthday, when I believe she expects to come into a small trust fund. I don't begrudge the outlay, for I am lost in admiration of that woman's cleverness in bleeding me; but what I should like to know is why I allow myself to be bled?"

"It is your kind heart, of which you are so ashamed," said Mrs. Gale. "You have been more than good to them, and I am sure Mrs. Lamb used

always to speak of you as their benefactor."

"That was before I incurred her scorn by declining to send Isabelle abroad for the completion of her musical education," said Howard. "Having thus far pirated the cultivation of her voice from you, I suppose they thought it was my turn next. They were kind enough to me on South Washington Square, but since they have been living at the Hotel Splendid they have grown so proud they will hardly associate with me."

"Oh, they frequently remind me that when they first knew me I was nothing but a singing teacher, in very humble circumstances indeed," said Mrs. Gale, placidly. "That is, when I venture to give my opinion on social matters—the desirability of Charley Krupp, for example." Her blue eyes were merry and sad at once, and had an expression of appealing sweetness. Though her widowhood was old she still wore black, with white bands at her throat and wrists. She had made a runaway marriage, lost her husband, and struggled on by herself, unforgiven and unnoticed by her family, until the death of a stony-hearted but intestate father had relieved her necessities and empowered her to help others who were writhing in the same quicksand of unaccustomed poverty. Howard had known her only in her prosperity, through their mutual beneficiaries, the Lambs, who were wont to speak of him as a selfish old bachelor, not half so generous as poor old General Hiller, and an absolute miser when contrasted with that magnificent prodigal, Charley Krupp.

"If that fellow is really going to marry Isabelle he'd better be about it," Howard observed. "By the way, I received a most urgent note from Mother Lamb, asking me to be her security for some hats she wishes to purchase for Isabelle's trousseau. You see, the birthday is rapidly approaching; but how much do you suppose will be left of that trust fund by the time the girl can get possession of it?"

"Nothing at all, I fear. Well, at least Mr. Krupp is rich, but he is such a horrible man, and he has made her so very conspicuous with yachting and coaching and theatre parties that it amounts to a positive notoriety! I shall be relieved to see them safely married."

"From Harlem flats to the Splendid is a pyrotechnic flight, and I don't wonder that Mrs. Travers could not follow it—apart from the affair of the cloak, which I had not heard."

"Well, you see, it was when Mr. Krupp was beginning to pay Isabelle the most marked attention, and really, the Lambs had seemed to be trying very hard to live economically, and Mrs. Lamb was to take care of the apartment while Isabelle gave singing and elocution lessons. Mrs. Travers was awfully generous, and fairly furnished those rooms for them. They appeared to appreciate it, and swore they would never attempt to live in expensive hotels again. Then one very cold day Isabelle called at Mrs. Travers's in the thinnest kind of a Spring jacket. Mrs. Travers was naturally horrified, and questioned her about it, and it came out that their Winter clothes were being detained at the Morrisania, where they were months in debt, and they were positively suffering for the lack of them. Mrs. Travers didn't know what to do, for she really wasn't prepared to pay their arrears at the Morrisania, so finally she said to Isabelle: 'You may go to Marlin's, where I have a bill, and select a warm Winter jacket for yourself, something sensible and serviceable, and have it charged to me.' Isabelle was very much pleased, and went home to get her mother to go with her and choose the coat. Now, here comes the awful part of the story. Two nights later Mrs. Travers went to the opera, and there in a box, with Mr. Krupp and some other people, sat Isabelle, looking like a duchess, with a most gorgeous brocaded cape thrown over her shoulders. Mrs. Travers was surprised, but she concluded that the Lambs

had somehow got their trunks. In two days more came a most frightful bill from Marlin's for a brocaded opera cloak. She sent at once for Isabelle, who appeared in tears and her old jacket. It seemed that when she went home to get her mother she found this invitation from Mr. Krupp, and as she had no evening wrap, they decided to buy one instead of the jacket. Mrs. Travers was furious, and the Lambs were insulted, and they sublet their flat, which hadn't been paid for, and went to the Splendid. Goodness only knows how they will pay their bill there, unless Mr. Krupp proposes to settle it after he and Isabelle are married."

"I suggest that the bridal procession be headed by troops of liberated friends, beating drums and clashing cymbals," said Howard. "On the wedding day I shall send you a pyramid of flowers, in token that our long bondage is over."

"That reminds me that they want me to go to the proprietor of the Morrisania and see on what terms he will part with those trunks," said Mrs. Gale. "I went to General Hiler to ask if he would do anything toward helping them. As it was a private matter, he invited me into his inner office, and do you know when I came out some horrid men stared at me and laughed! I hope I shall never be obliged to go there again."

"I hope not, indeed!" said Howard, indignantly. "The next time it is necessary to beard the General in his den I shall do it myself."

"Oh, he was very nice, and complimented me on my business ability. And he says he will go down and bully the proprietor, and tell him there isn't fifty dollars' worth of second-hand clothing in the trunks. I tried to explain to him that that wasn't strictly true, but he wouldn't listen."

"Those Lambs are making you consort with a fine crew!" said Howard. "Remember, the next time they order you to do any of their dirty work for them you are to send for me."

II

THE following week a frantic message summoned Mrs. Gale to the Hotel Splendid. There she found the Lambs, mother and daughter, enthroned on a divan, their arms about each other, their eyes alternately blazing and streaming, while all about the room were strewn garments of the most elaborate and expensive variety.

"So you have come at last!" Mrs. Lamb exclaimed, in tones of cutting irony. "It is kind of you, I'm sure, to leave your luxurious home to seek the society of the ruined and abandoned. My poor, deserted child knows how to be grateful. Speak, Isabelle, and tell Mrs. Gale the ignominy, the degradation, of your situation!"

"Oh, my goodness! what has happened now?" cried poor Mrs. Gale, palpitating with alarm.

Isabelle rose like a tragedy queen.

"Mr. Krupp was married yesterday morning to Pussie Granger, a viper whom I introduced to him. It is all in this morning's paper. My heart is broken. Oh, let me die, let me die!"

"Die, Isabelle?" cried her mother, in awful tones. "Die, before making that villain and his accomplice suffer for their betrayal of the most sacred feelings of a young girl's heart, not to speak of a mother's anguish? Have you no spirit? No daughter of mine shall thus tamely submit to an outrage. Listen, Mrs. Gale, and see to what my innocent child has been subjected:

"The marriage of Charley Krupp, the well-known millionaire sport, and Miss Pussie Granger, of this city, which was quietly solemnized yesterday morning by the Rev. George Nott, was a surprise to Miss Isabelle Lamb, who up to that time, with the best of reasons, considered herself the future Mrs. Krupp. Miss Lamb is a beautiful and talented young vocalist, who with her widowed mother resides at the Hotel Splendid. On her twenty-first birthday she will inherit a large fortune. It is predicted that Miss Lamb and her friends will make it hot for Charley when he returns from his honeymoon.

"See how my injured girl is dragged before the public! But they shall pay for it. They shall see whether he can make my Isabelle the talk of the town, with his assiduous attentions, and then throw her aside like an old glove. There lies the trousseau," the injured parent continued, with a comprehensive wave of the hand toward the silks and velvets scattered over chairs and beds; "all of the most expensive material and made at the best places, as befitted a millionaire's bride. There are his presents, which I shall send back by General Hiller at the earliest opportunity; and if he has the spirit of a man he will call the wretch out! Oh, if your poor father were living, the honor of the Lambs would be avenged!"

"It is horrible, but that shocking piece in the paper is the worst of all. Who could have written that dreadful thing about Isabelle and her friends?" Mrs. Gale demanded, indignantly.

"I gave it to the reporter myself! You don't suppose I have so little proper pride as to submit tamely to an insult?" cried Mrs. Lamb, scornfully. "No! we propose to invoke the aid of the law. The base man has been our security both in this hotel and at the dressmaker's, and he shall suffer for his wickedness if there is justice in this land."

"Do consult with Mr. Howard. He will show you how to avoid this publicity," Mrs. Gale pleaded.

"I have already put the case in the hands of a lawyer—the best in the city," Mrs. Lamb announced, grandly. "He will bring suit against Mr. Krupp for breach of promise. He thinks we should recover heavy damages."

"Oh, please don't do such a dreadful thing! Surely anything would be better than that. It is so terrible for a young girl to be made notorious!" Mrs. Gale protested.

"He has made her notorious already. Look at these wedding garments!" cried Mrs. Lamb. "Look at the coaching trip to Newport, the yachting parties, the opera boxes—and my daughter the central figure of every scene! Look at her, I say! Is

she a girl to be scorned and flouted? *Some* people may be accustomed to being downtrodden—they may *enjoy* being stepped on—but the blood of the Lambs is too proud to brook an insult.”

“Oh, let me die!” wailed Isabelle again. “Let us turn on the gas and die together.”

“Yes, yes, my poor innocent,” screamed her now hysterical mother, folding her in her embrace. “We can die together, but we will not be degraded without getting damages.”

Mrs. Gale wrung her hands. She had coped with many difficulties in her day, but with none so insuperable as those which perpetually encompassed the Lambs.

III

DESPITE entreaties and warnings the injured pair continued to see reporters, and the papers teemed with Isabelle's wrongs. Howard swore in disgust that nevermore would he heed their summons. Mrs. Travers washed her hands of them, and General Hiller fled New York in alarm. Only Mrs. Gale remained faithful to the afflicted Lambs, bribing infuriated dress-makers to take back their wares, disposing of other valuables among her wealthier friends, finding lodgings for them in a cheap part of the town, paying their month's board in advance, and generally wearing herself out in their desperate cause. Isabelle's unfortunate notoriety precluded all idea of her gaining pupils, but it brought her an offer from a concert-hall, which her lawyer ordered her to decline. Howard had refused to listen to the tale of their woes, and had even kept away from Mrs. Gale in his vexation, when one stormy afternoon he was summoned to her by a telegram. It was dusk when he arrived, and he found her in the hall, struggling with her overshoes and a cough. “You surely are not going out in this storm?” he exclaimed. “I needn't ask whether it is after the Lambs, as usual, but at least let me call a cab.”

“No, the elevated is quicker, and even then I may be too late,” said Mrs. Gale, all in a flutter. There were tears and defiance in her eyes as she turned the door knob. “They have left their lodgings. Isabelle's birthday came, and there were so many judgments against them that it took all their money, and they were absolutely penniless. General Hiller went there and found them gone, and he came directly to me, and the landlady said that she turned them out because they threatened to make an end of themselves, and she couldn't have a coroner in her house. They were always threatening to turn on the gas, and now I believe they have done it. Oh, I feel as if it were all my fault, because I wouldn't send Isabelle abroad!”

Howard, greatly to his own surprise, found himself encircling her with a soothing arm. “Confound the Lambs!” he said. “You have stood by them through thick and thin, you've done what their own flesh and blood wouldn't do for them, and now, if I hear you reproach yourself about them again, I swear I'll never lend them another cent.”

“It may be too late to lend,” sighed Mrs. Gale. She had not even noticed his arm. So they went out into the slashing sleet and struggled their way to the elevated station. General Hiller, in a cab, was also scouring the city in search of the lost Lambs. From lodging to lodging they were tracked, until at length, toward eight o'clock, their pursuers found them unpacking some hand-luggage in the second story back of a Westside boarding-house. Mrs. Gale cried outright with relief at finding them still alive, but the Lambs received her with ineffable scorn. How silly of her to go chasing them from place to place, giving people the impression that they were criminals! Didn't she know them better than to suppose that they would turn on the gas without sending farewell letters to their friends, whether they had shown themselves *true* friends or not? They were disposed to kill the fatted calf for General

Hiller, who had kept his cab waiting and now invited them to dinner at the Café Hugo. Mrs. Gale went home and had bronchitis.

IV

BEFORE the famous breach of promise suit could be brought to trial, Charley Krupp died of apoplexy, and General Hiller again left town. At this time he had become a monster and "no gentleman," and Howard stood high in favor. The Lambs, shorn of their last hope of opulence, decided to begin a new life. Mrs. Gale, the forgiving Mrs. Travers and Howard joined in furnishing a small flat for their beneficiaries, who took two young typewriters to board with them. After herculean labors some music pupils were secured for Isabelle, who now desired to adorn the stage, and General Hiller, returning after the plate had been passed, got her an engagement in a small singing part.

For some weeks all went well, until the Lambs, beginning to see company once more, decided to add to their ornaments on the instalment plan, without consulting the replenishers of their purse. Etchings and bric-à-brac blossomed thickly in the diminutive apartment; Persian rugs bedecked the floors; the old piano lent by Mrs. Gale was sent back, at her cost, with a note explaining that they had decided to purchase a new one by paying \$8 a month, as this did not suit Isabelle's voice. In the midst of thickening difficulties Mrs. Lamb fell ill, demanded grouse and a specialist, made her will appointing General Hiller "administrator of her estate," had a relapse, and died.

The news was brought to Mrs. Gale at the breakfast table by one of the typewriters, who besought her to come at once, as nothing could be done until she arrived. She despatched a note to Howard informing him of the disaster, and hastened to the apartment. The tiny parlor was already filled with the Lambs' poorer friends, who sat

around in tearful expectancy. Poor Isabelle's sobs and screams sounded from an inner room, and the whole atmosphere was heavy with sordid and irremediable tragedy. The other typewriter was just starting to her work. She seized Mrs. Gale's arm and whispered to her: "The man has come after the piano, and he's going to take it away. I told him you wouldn't let him. We shall need it for the funeral."

"Why are all these people here, harrowing poor Isabelle?" Mrs. Gale demanded, with an attempt at severity.

"They are waiting for you. Mrs. Lamb told them before she died about your adopting Isabelle, so of course nobody wants to do anything without consulting you."

Mrs. Gale sank on the umbrella stand. "*Adopting Isabelle!*" she gasped. "Oh, my goodness! Oh, why doesn't Mr. Howard come?"

As if in answer to her need, the apartment bell rang, and as the typewriter pushed the door-opening button, Howard's voice and General Hiller's were heard in the hall below. In another moment Mrs. Gale was in the outer passage, pouring forth her terror at the situation confronting her. Never, never had she made such a promise to Mrs. Lamb! To pity Isabelle, to help her, even to support her, was one matter, but to adopt her was quite another.

Yet how could she ever tell the girl that her poor dead mother had misrepresented facts? No, she couldn't. She should have to adopt her, after all. Oblivious to appearances, she sat on the dirty stairs, trembling and sobbing, while the mourners waited in the parlor and the typewriter hurried away, leaving the door open.

"Adopt her! Indeed, you shall do no such thing!" cried Howard, in a fine rage. "The idea is preposterous. Go home at once, and let me explain to these people that Mrs. Lamb was laboring under a delusion, and that you are under no obligations whatever to assume further responsibility."

"If you do, you will commit an

action unworthy of a gentleman!" General Hiller declared, growing red in the face. "Let Mrs. Gale follow her generous impulses and justify the trust of that poor dead woman. No true lady could turn her back on that unfortunate girl in her affliction."

"I don't want to turn my back," sobbed Mrs. Gale, "but I never made any such promise—never!"

"And you sha'n't be forced into making it now," said Howard, with decision. "I've stood by too long and allowed you to be imposed on. There is such a thing as riding a willing horse to death, and you sha'n't be burdened with an Old Man of the Sea if I can help it."

"Do you call that a decent way of alluding to a friendless orphan?" cried the General, purple with righteous indignation. "Speak, madam, and tell your friend that he is too zealous."

"Be very careful how you commit yourself, Mrs. Gale. Don't be browbeaten. Say that you will contribute a certain yearly sum toward Isabelle's maintenance, if you choose, but don't submit to this preposterous imposition."

"Sir," cried the General, "your conduct is heartless and calculating to the last degree, but you need not assume that this poor child is friendless. Even if those who led her to consider them her natural protectors have shamelessly deserted her, I will remain true to her. She shall have a protector in Alexander Hiller, who never yet went back on a woman. Before I'll let my old friend's daughter come to want or dependence, by gad, I'll marry her!"

And he did.

V

MRS. GALE gave Isabelle her second trousseau, and suffered agonies of suspense until the wedding was safely over. She hardly ventured to draw

a long breath until, at the conclusion of the ceremony, she found herself in her own library, exhausted, but filled with a great calm. Howard had come back from the church with her, and now sat opposite, his eyes dwelling on her slender black figure and delicate features with a tenderness that had often shone in them of late, but that she noticed now for the first time. It confused her, and she said, hurriedly: "What *shall* we do without the Lambs?"

"I have a suggestion," said Howard. "It seems to me a very good one. You must have somebody to worry over and make sacrifices for. So long as you had the Lambs to impose on you, you never noticed me. I was a person to dance attendance on Lambs, to search for Lambs, to settle Lambs in furnished lodgings, to invent pupils for Lambs, and finally, by a special mercy, to snatch you from the ravening jaws of Lambs."

"And I never thanked you for it!" said Mrs. Gale, remorsefully. "But oh, you will never know how glad I was to hear your voice in the hall! All those dreadful people, and no one to *make* me take a stand until you came! And I am sure nothing else would ever have goaded General Hiller into knowing his own mind."

"Well, now we are Lamb-less, thank fortune, and your hands are free for fresh missionary labors," said Howard. "Don't you think I might do as a substitute?"

"You always will joke about them!" said Mrs. Gale, a little reproachfully.

"I'm not joking at all. I have known I loved you ever since that day in the hall when you forgot my existence and opened your umbrella in my face. Dearest, won't you try to remember me now?"

"I think," Mrs. Gale confessed, diffidently, a few minutes later, "that General Hiller and I found out our minds at the same moment."



A BALLADE OF REGRET

LIFE cheats us of so many things
 And seldom pays the sums she owes;
 She holds her joys from clowns and kings,
 And waxes prodigal of woes.
 Yet for her flouts slight malice grows,
 Only we sue for one small debt
 Whose payment all accounts would close—
 That certain kiss we did not get.

The kisses that our lips have had—
 They have been plentiful, God wot!
 And some were sad and some were glad,
 Some accidental—and some not;
 Some, on reflection, leave a blot,
 In Time's oblivion some have set,
 But *this* can never be forgot—
 That certain kiss we did not get.

Whether we begged and were denied,
 Or proved too ignorant or wise,
 Whether we dallied or we tried,
 Blundered with truth or tripped on lies,
 Too late, too late we realize,
 With sad reproach and sore regret,
 That one of all had been our prize—
 That certain kiss we did not get.

L'ENVOI

Sweethearts, turn not reproving eyes—
 To-day's caress is sweet, but yet
 What maid can give, howe'er she tries,
 That certain kiss we did not get?

JOHN WINWOOD.



THE FASHIONABLE PACE

BROWNE-STONE—Say, old man, I haven't seen or heard anything of my wife in two or three weeks. You haven't seen her lately, have you?
 SWELLINGTON—No; maybe she's at home. Have you looked?
 BROWNE-STONE—No, by Jove! Never thought of it.

THE BARRIER OF THE PAST

By Gertrude F. Lynch

IT was half-past five when she crossed the library and looked over his shoulder. She noticed the clock idly, and afterward, when she rehearsed the scene in isolation, she remembered the hour as one remembers trivialities.

He was gazing at a photograph, and the secret drawer of his desk was open. There were some letters with faded superscriptions and a withered rose. She could read the words on the slip of paper entwining the stem of the flower, and did so before she was aware. "Heaven, June, 18—."

He shuffled the photograph uneasily under some papers, and then, as if ashamed of his action, drew it forth and handed it to her without a word.

She recalled the fact that once before, when she entered the room hurriedly, he had closed the desk with a quick motion, and had seemed half-embarrassed at her approach.

The photograph was of a not extraordinarily pretty girl in evening dress, with a smile on her lips and a flower in her hair.

She looked at it carefully—her absorption designed to cover a moment's wonder as to what she must do or say. She had long since learned that impulse is a bad guide in marital dialogues, and that sincerity of speech is permissible only on propitious occasions.

She handed it back. "What a pretty face!"

Her tone was impassive, but her action, in sinking into a chair at his side, seemed to offer time and opportunity for explanation. It was a bad moment, and a man has not a woman's

facility in slipping over thin places without disaster.

The open drawer, the letters, the rose and its tell-tale epitaph, the girl's face—they were the elements of a situation that could not be dismissed with a word, a look or an embrace.

"She is a girl I once knew," he said, and felt that the remark was as unnecessary as it was banal. He would not be likely to fill the secret drawer of his desk with souvenirs of a woman whom he had never known. Something of this thought he saw in the quickly veiled flash of the dark eyes.

"It was before I knew you. I thought at one time I should ask her to marry me. I never did. I met you—and—" he leaned forward and took her hand—"you know the rest."

No, she did not know. She did not know why, having chosen her, he should preserve the reminders of one whom she had vanquished. If the other woman had declined the proffered honor of his heart and hand, she could appreciate the situation, for it is but natural that a man should gaze with wonder and curiosity at the portrait of a woman who has refused him. But under the circumstances that he had stated his action was a criticism, for it implied a longing for the other, a want she had not supplied, the acknowledgment of a mistake.

He had said once that she had the keenest sense of justice of any woman he had ever known, and the fervor of his statement made it unnecessarily apparent that he had known many women. She had been proud of this distinction, and lived up to its requirements, as far as possible. She real-

ized that the present moment might become a Waterloo unless her forces were rallied quickly.

She gazed at the photograph meditatively, then turned it over and read the name and place.

She understood now the hesitancy in his manner which had marked the later stages of their courtship. She had not understood it then, believing it to be but the natural drawing back before a man asks the fateful question that is to settle the destiny of two lives. She knew now that he had been wavering in his choice; that Absence and Propinquity were fighting the fight, which goes on unceasingly, like that of Life and Death, and with ever varying results. They had been married three years, and, all at once, these years seemed to have been founded on a false conception.

She was not foolish enough to believe that she was the only woman in his life—or to desire to be. She had felt vaguely grateful to the others who had influenced him for the better. Without their influence he would not have been attractive to her, and she acknowledged them to be an inseparable part of his nature. But, like every woman, she desired that at her coming these others should become unrealities, merely steps in development over which there is neither the wish nor the power to return. She desired that he look on them as women in the abstract leading to the woman in the concrete.

His attempted explanation irritated her, and she felt that she could not trust herself to speak.

He had a man's way of stating a result and brushing aside the gradations of thought and feeling contributing to it. She had a woman's contempt for the spoken and a woman's infinite curiosity concerning the unspoken. That there was a girl whom he had contemplated asking to marry him, and had not asked, was a matter of little moment; that he had preserved her portrait, letters and flowers, and looked at them stealthily and frequently, was everything.

She did not say this. What she did say was:

"I expect the Ronalds to dinner to-night. I know you don't like her, and she knows it, so I wish you would at least convince her husband of the contrary; that will go far toward reconciling her."

He could not hide his relief. He showed it in a sudden, expressive gesture, as he raised his arms behind his head, clasping his hands and swinging his desk chair to its back limit.

"I'll make an everlasting enemy of him with my devotion, if you say the word." With his eyes he said no less plainly: "You are the one woman in the world, for you never disappoint."

Here were all the elements of a connubial combustion ready to her hand, and with admirable self-control she forbore to touch the match.

She was standing at his side, with the photograph held carelessly. She replaced it on the desk before him alongside the faded rose and the letters, then turned to go.

He held her with a detaining word. "These things make me think of home." There was an apologetic tone in his voice as if he read her thought that his explanation had been an insult to her comprehension.

He tore the photograph across twice and threw it with vehemence into the copper waste-basket. The letters followed, with torn gashes from edge to edge. Then he looked at her and smiled, with the diffusive smile that holds something in reserve. She answered with the smile of a woman who understands the man's smile perfectly, as she perfectly understands that he does not understand hers.

She left him, wounded by the knowledge that no after remembrance could blot out those tantalizing words on the slip of paper about the stem of the rose, which, even under the keen observation of her eyes, he had not been able to bring himself to destroy.

Their dinner was quite perfect. The epigrams came in with the soup,

and remained to give zest to the Bénédictine. Mrs. Ronalds was the recipient of an excess of attention, and radiated satisfaction. Then, too, she was not only conscious of being better dressed than her hostess, but her husband, who had shown symptoms of taking her as a matter of course, was eyeing her with an expression that recalled the days of their courtship, and she determined to make use of her host's devotion to extract certain millinery promises on her way home.

It was while the good-byes were being said that she ejaculated, moved more by a desire to fill up a sudden gap in the conversation than by any personal interest:

"Mr. Le Fevre is not looking well, Sadie. What is the matter? Too many stupid guests to entertain?"

She met the disclaimers for which her remark gave the cue with smiling deprecation. Her hostess ended by saying: "I have thought the same thing myself; now your words make me see that my fear is not groundless. I am going to persuade him to take a vacation—a real bachelor's vacation. He'll come back better satisfied, I'm sure, with his home and me."

This in turn was a cue for the guests' disclaimers. They showed a marked ability for paying compliments, not encroaching in the slightest degree on their host's and hostess's copyrights.

Their enthusiastic phrases broke the silence of the outer hall and followed them in receding waves until finally cut off by the closing of the carriage door.

Le Fevre drew his wife into the library. "Let's rest here a bit. I must get the taste of that woman out of my mouth."

He lighted a cigar and brushed some ash from the lapel of his Tuxedo; then he turned and looked at her searchingly.

She was sitting so that the flame from the gas log illuminated her face, which was serenity personified.

"Did you mean what you just said to Mrs. Ronalds?"

"That she was the Twentieth Century Aspasia?"

He moved his shoulders in an irritated gesture. "Her belief in her charm is pitiable, considering the facts. No, I meant what you said about my going away—alone."

"Yes. I meant it. You have not been back to see your old friends since you left college. A man ought to return to old scenes once in a while, if it is only to be convinced that better is a stalled ox with contentment than a dinner of herbs and hatred therewith."

He did not smile at her paraphrase. "You really want me to go—alone?"

"I really want you to go—alone."

She took occasion to arrange her snowy ruffles about her jet-tipped slippers, an action that had a twofold purpose, for by it she avoided meeting his eyes.

"Very well. I will do as you say. I should like to see the old place—and the old friends." He spoke half in bravado, hoping that she would retract. He realized that he was being compelled to a crucial test from which there was no escape, and he had the masculine distaste for a forced choice, particularly when it related to the other sex.

Apparently her last word had been spoken.

A man never thoroughly comprehends a woman, but he has half-knowledges, almost feminine intuitions, judgments formed by propinquity and study. He believed that the predominant element in her resolve was pride, and in this conclusion he was partly right. To reign over a divided kingdom is only semi-satisfying to one's self-esteem, and being his wife while another woman occupied his thoughts was an intolerable condition that aroused feelings of revolt. The infidelity of the soul is unpunishable by law, but the wound of its offense is more lasting than its physical counterpart. To send him back to the woman whose image filled his thoughts, and force him to compare her with the woman who bore his name and shared his life, with the

possibility that he would return convinced that at the fork of the trail he had taken a wrong turning—this was a purpose that only a woman of strong feeling, of strong personality and with an infinite capacity for making herself miserable, could have entertained.

Protest would be unavailing. To refuse her wish would leave the sting of doubt. No after devotion could destroy the knowledge that he had longed for the other woman in secret, and the fear that he would always long for her.

He was to go back to change doubt into certainty; to learn where he stood; to solve the problem of their future.

As she had crossed the library at the end of their interview before dinner, the conviction had come to her that she must do something emphatic. The homœopathic remedies of time and patience were not for a nature like hers, which dares all and attempts all. It was better to know the worst than to live on, conscious that whenever the library door closed between them he was with the other woman in spirit, the withered rose in his hand and the sentiment of which it was the symbol in his heart.

During the next few days, in an artificial acquiescence, he made his preparations for departure. She helped him, treating the separation as if there were no undercurrent of seriousness.

Only at the last the curtain of reserve was torn. At the moment of parting he placed his hands on her shoulders and looked at her long, as if he would read her innermost soul. "I shall return to you soon—more yours than ever."

"Could I have sent you if I believed otherwise?" she answered.

He fingered a large paper-knife with an Indian-head handle, fashioned by a clever Iroquois, while he waited for Mary Haight to come to him. How often he had waited in this same room, in this same deep window seat, for the same reward, during the four years

from the immaturity of the freshman to the blasé seriousness of the senior—four years of unremitting worship at her crowded shrine; for devotion to the beautiful Miss Haight was, in those days, as much a part of the curriculum as the running high jump or a try at the stroke oar in the shell.

He could recall countless visits, but the last of all, just preceding his departure into the world where he was to try his new-fledged wings, burned brightest in his memory. He rehearsed it again, as he had rehearsed it so many times before, while he twirled the paper-knife and listened expectantly for her footsteps on the stairs.

He had said, jestingly, "I have come to complete my course before I go," and to her laughing interrogation as to what he meant, had answered: "Oh, I understand every senior proposes to the belle of the town before he goes, otherwise he does not consider that he has become a full-fledged graduate."

"And you have come to propose?" He remembered her beautiful dimples and the heightened color in her cheeks.

His tone was still mock-serious, but his heart was beating fast as he said:

"Yes, my parents are desirous I shall take the full course—leave nothing untried. You know how exacting parents are."

Someone came in, and she rose quickly from his side.

"Oh, Mr. Ames! How do you do? Mr. Le Fevre was just proposing to me. He says that every senior must do that before he gets his degree. Have you come for that purpose, too?"

The newcomer gave him the society grip before he answered his question—how all those trifles came back to him! "Indeed I have. Don't say yes, please, for I can't get back for three years. I'm off to South Africa."

Then the trio kept the ball of airy persiflage tossing back and forth until, as first comer, he rose to go.

He had often wondered since that

memorable visit, as he wondered at this minute, sitting in the same seat, waiting for her coming, what would have happened if Ames had not interrupted; if, in the jesting about marriage, some tone in her voice, some quickly veiled flash in her eyes, had told him that he might hope to be treated seriously if he became serious himself.

Occasionally, during those four years of their association, he had believed himself the favored one, but there were so many, and she had a clever girl's way of playing one against the other and keeping all by that feminine elusiveness which protects while it tempts.

He had heard of her since his arrival, for it was now the third day that he had taken up the threads of past acquaintance and friendship. She was still beautiful, popular, free. She had spent much time abroad, and on her return had gradually withdrawn from the college set to take her place in the older society of the aristocratic town on whose outskirts the college buildings stood.

There was a portfolio of photographs on a side table, and he opened it, hoping to see the faces of some of the men he had known and chummed with. He was not disappointed. They were all there, with one exception—himself—all the old crowd, even Ames, the man who had interrupted his last visit. He wondered what the absence of his portrait meant. Was it possible that she, too, had a secret drawer and— He did not dare pursue the thought.

There were quick steps on the stairs, the velvet portière moved on its smooth bar, and she came toward him with both hands outstretched and words of welcome on her lips. "How good of you to come to see me, and how good it is to see you again!"

It was true—what they had told him. She was more beautiful than ever. All that she had lacked time had brought her—a woman's poise and grace, and maturity of thought and feeling—without detracting from remembered charms.

They chatted together about the old days until the lateness of the hour warned him that he had taken another leaf from the past and duplicated a former transgression.

The six years of separation and the three years of married life faded away into a nebulous haze of reminiscence as he left the house. He found himself unconsciously making a wrong turning to the college instead of to his hotel.

He received there a letter from his wife. He answered it immediately, giving an eloquent description of the old place. He described the adventures of many of the men who had drifted back, after seeking other fields; of the renewal of old friendships and the making of new. His letter made up in length what it lacked in other respects.

It was followed by other letters, truthful in what they contained, but leaving much to the imagination to read between the lines. He wrote her of the daily parties, made up on one pretext or another; of the walks and drives, receptions, dinners, parties and calls, but he did not tell her that in all of these he had become, as in the old times, a shadow of the beautiful Miss Haight, the publicity of his attentions screened, as heretofore, by the fact that he was not alone in the field, and was only one of many.

He did not tell her that one night in the moonlight he had shown Mary Haight the withered rose, and that she had confessed, after a strenuous effort on his part to extract the information, that she had kept his photograph—where, she would not tell.

The two were alone one evening in a little alcove formed by jutting stairs, which had been utilized by their hostess to make an Oriental corner. A dim light afforded him tantalizing glimpses of auburn hair, blue eyes and snowy shoulders.

"Do you know," he said, smoothing the lace ruffle near him, "I thought you were going to marry Ames? You remember I left you together that last day—I wonder if you *do* remember—

and I said to myself, 'Yes, Ames is the man, else why does he come just before going, and why does she let me go away?'"

"Ames!" She lifted her eyebrows petulantly. "How could you think such a thing! Why, he always fell over his feet coming into a room! Imagine marrying a man like that!"

"Well, then, there was Berri."

"Berri, poor fellow! I told you he died on the plains. It was very sad. He had so much promise."

"Yours?"

"Don't pun. No."

"Then there was Hull."

"He ran for mayor in some Western town, and they wouldn't elect him because he dressed too well. If his mental equipment had only approached the sartorial!"

He laughed, then lost himself in an absorbed study of her dimples.

"Tell me—" he had taken up her fan and opened and closed it nervously—"why did you not marry?"

She paused for a moment, and then met his question with another:

"Why did you?"

He looked at her half-wonderingly. If the past were to live over again! If he stood once more at the fork of the trail, would he take a different turning?

Her eyes were on him, half-mischievous, half-serious, and her question remained unanswered, as did his own.

He drew his watch from his pocket, opened it, and showed her his wife's face, photographed on the case.

She looked at it so long that he felt she was trying to regain a suddenly destroyed composure.

Out of the many men who might have been hers for the choosing, this one man had been placed on the pedestal of desire. Some untoward circumstances—her own maidenly reserve, perhaps, in not showing her preference more clearly, and the blundering appearance of a man at his last visit—had prevented their friendship ripening into acknowledged love. Time and fate had separated them and another woman had stepped between,

with the barrier of a marriage certificate.

Her heart had not been broken, but she had realized that he was the only man she had ever known, or ever could know, who might make her happy. During the years since their separation she had drifted, looking forward, in a vague, indifferent way, to the time when some man, less displeasing than the rest, should be strong enough to convince her that life with him would be less wearying than her independent existence.

He had come back to her. All through the glorious Autumn weather that thought had lent a *motif* to the harmony of horses' hoofs, to the strains of violins, to the chatter of dinner and dance. She was not forgotten. She was not outranked. Time had avenged her. He had made a mistake. And though never, except the one time when he showed her the withered rose, had their conversation touched the sacred ground of sentiment, she felt that she had done well to wait, were it only to enjoy untrammelled this Indian Summer of hope.

A glance at his wife's face dispelled any illusions she might have cherished. That was not the face of a woman with whom a man could be unhappy. She was not a woman who could have been married for aught but herself.

"She is very beautiful." She gave him the watch, and then, resting her elbow on her knee and placing her dimpled chin in her palm, she turned her face and looked squarely at him.

"Why did you come back?"

He waited a long time to answer, an interregnum filled with the gay melody of stringed instruments, with merry voices and light laughter. Couple after couple passed their retreat, looked in and smiled knowingly at their seclusion.

"She sent me," he said, hesitatingly, and then, feeling that he had gone too far to retreat, he related the circumstances.

All the underlying motives of the wife's act, unknown to him, were as an open book to her, for she, too, had

loved, doubted and suffered. She appreciated the glorious recklessness of the action as only a woman could, and she felt that she could be no less generous.

"You must go back to her at once," and her soft, pretty hand met his. "I shall not see you again, for tomorrow I leave town to visit my grandparents. Good-bye. It has been lovely to see you and talk over the old days, and to know that you are successful and happy, and—and strong. But it couldn't go on, and so—good-bye once more."

A young man was approaching the corner. She called him. "Mr. Stiles, are you looking for me? This is our dance, I believe."

She rose suddenly and joined the youth, who smiled fatuously at her approach.

It was all over in a second. The leaf of the past was turned forever.

He had not heard from his wife for over a week, and had not written, their sole communication being the telegram by which he announced his return. How should he make her comprehend? Had he been to blame? He could not answer that insistent question, though he knew that the presence of the other woman had been a distraction. At his wife's wish he had gone into the past, he had taken up the old life where he left it years before—the old life of enthusiasms, of irresponsibilities, of days without past or future; and of that life, now, as then, Mary Haight had been an integral influence.

Though he had submitted to his wife's expressed wish without protest, yet he had been conscious all along of a sense of opposition and revolt, which now gained a mastery of his feelings.

What right had she to play fast and loose with him in this way? He had held her the one woman in the world. Why had she sent him back to the other? Would he have treated her in like manner if he had found her with the letter of a discarded lover in her hand and an expression of regret in her eyes? Assuredly not. He would

have held her with firmer clasp. He would have allowed no neglect or forgetfulness of his own to furnish a loophole in her mind for the thought of the other man to enter in and take possession. Had she been a strong woman or a very weak one in this crisis?

She was standing at the library fire when he came in, just where she stood when he said good-bye. Even as he crossed the room he could see that she looked strangely grave and tired.

She did not move to greet him.

He had thought to face her in anger—the anger of injured innocence; but all at once he realized what the weeks had been to her—the agony through which she had passed. Her eyes did not accuse. He wished they would. It would be less heart-breaking than her expression of profound hopelessness.

He drew from his pocket the faded rose and laid it on the flames. The fire leaped up, and in a second a tiny mass of white ashes was all that remained of it. Still he did not approach her, and she remained silent, like a beautiful statue.

His voice was husky when he spoke.

"I was not conscious of any want in my life you did not fill. You seemed a part of myself, as much a part as my mind, my soul, my conscience. I never questioned your presence nor your power any more than I did theirs. Sometimes, when I was alone, thoughts of the past would come to me. I would go back to the days when life was a playtime, leading apparently only to a future of ambitions gratified and hopes fulfilled. I looked at the portrait of Mary Haight, at her letters, at the withered rose, as one hums the notes of a melody that is associated in one's mind with past gaieties. There was no infidelity in this act. Every heart has its Pompeii—a buried city of hopes, desires, ambitions, affections. Sometimes, in the gloaming, we stir the ashes and trace in them the outlines of our Spanish castles. A few of us retain the outward symbols of

those old pleasures, photographs, letters, flowers, whatever they may be, and they become the material manifestations of the mental state in our moments of retrospection. The knowledge of these moments embitters many married lives, yet the man who needs something for his fingers to touch, something for his eyes to see, is no more unfaithful than the man who, by a sudden turn of the stopcock of thought, can achieve the same result.

"You sent me back to her unwillingly. I went, cursing the misfortune, the half-knowledge—regretting with all the force of my nature that anything had come into our lives to disturb its perfect harmony.

"I became a boy again. The old scenes, the *alma mater*, the sight of the caps and gowns, the atmosphere of the college campus, rejuvenated me. I had difficulty sometimes to prevent the class yell from leaping to my lips. Then I saw—her."

His wife, as if fascinated by the boldness of his eloquence, drew nearer.

Unheeding, he went on:

"She was unchanged. Life had dealt gently with her, as it does with its favorites. She had the same charm, the elusive attraction, the vitalizing influence, as of old. Following in her wake at all the scenes of merriment in which I took part, I found it impossible to realize that the years had passed. I shut my eyes to that knowledge. I tried to believe that everything was as it once was, and that between the time of college days and the present there intervened no years of failure, struggle and curbed ambitions. I was successful. I forgot everything—even that I was not free—until she reminded me and sent me back."

She breathed heavily as one whose wound pains.

"I have come back to you, to my life of the present and future, with no regret for the past, with no desire for a change. If she should come in here now, into my everyday life, into my present environment, into comparison with you, the fascination would be destroyed. It was only—" he sighed deeply—"that she was a part of the past, of my youth. To have been forgetful of her would have been a sin against that time which, with its unattainable desires, haunts one's later years."

He took her hands and locked them fast in his.

"I wonder if I have made you understand a little of what is in my heart—the sincerity, the real devotion, as well as the great weakness. All that you have believed is true, not alone of the man you love, but of the fundamental law of his nature—that dual nature which differentiates man from the God as well as from the beast."

In his words had been no accusation, but she answered one in her forgiveness.

"I am not the first who has mistaken recklessness for bravery; who has believed that to stake one's happiness on the throw of the dice is the act of a heroine, when it is really but the bravado of a fool. I have learned that lesson even without your words. It is so easy to take the wrong turn, to deceive one's self as to the real motive underlying any action. The truer woman—" and she looked at the heap of white ashes on the hearth—"would have burned that rose in the flame of her own devotion and loyalty. I know that *now*, but you had to go away to teach me the lesson."



CHIVALROUS CONSIDERATION

SHE—You mean thing! What made you steal that kiss?

HE—I didn't want to go away and leave you thinking I was sorry I called.

A SERIOUS MASQUE

By Gwendolen Overton

THE lanes of Montigny, running narrow and green between their rose-grown hedges, are pleasant ways; but they are seldom trod save by the sabots of a peasant or by the heavy foot of some worker in the pottery factory under the hill.

Now and again a Parisian steps out at the little station, or a traveler turns aside from the main route and lingers among the orchards and fair fields. Petit Paul had seen a few Parisians and strangers, but never until now one like the girl who came up the path from the village. He stood quite still, grasping the rope of his goat, and watched her with almost an expression in his small black eyes.

It was *l'Anglaise*. Suzon had told him of her.

He answered her greeting with a dazed *bojou* as she flurried past in a whirl of white and blue—blue like that of the sky or of Loiret—and gazed after her, open-mouthed, until he saw her turn into the gateway of her house.

L'Anglaise, having passed down the garden walk between the lilac bushes and rows of fleurs-de-lis, entered the library through a low window.

She leaned back in a great chair and began leisurely to pull off her long white gloves. "Dorothy and I have missed you," she said. "Do you bring news from the outer world?"

The man, having greeted her, returned to the depths of many cushions, and answered: "Better than that."

She glanced about the room and at the volume-strewn tables. "Books?" she asked.

"Better yet."

"Sweets?"

He shook his head, and she made a petulant little grimace.

"There are several thousand things you might reasonably have brought down from Paris. How should I guess?"

He contemplated her with a lazy smile.

"Is it for Dorothy or for me?"

"Dorothy has one," he told her.

She sprang up and took from his hand the *Petit Journal* he was making pretense to read, and stood looking at him with great determination. But he reached a magazine from a tabouret and fell to turning over its leaves contentedly.

His wife came into the room. "You are teasing Annette again," she reproached.

"Mr. Cliffe won't tell me what he brought with him," the girl complained, pouting.

"It was a man," answered Mrs. Cliffe, as she went over to the tea tray.

Annette dropped on a stool and clasped her hands on her knees. "Tell me about him. Is he handsome? Is he here in the house? What is his name?" She put her little head on one side in an attitude of rapt attention.

"He is not in the house," Mrs. Cliffe replied, while she poured the tea; "he is going to stop at the inn for the present."

Her husband, rising to go for his cup, added: "He is young and good enough to look at—presumably unmarried. He wears tan shoes and a blue serge suit and a straw hat. It is weeks too early for a straw hat, but

he is an artist, and he comes out of Albion."

"An Englishman?"

"No; one of ourselves. But his studio is in London." Cliffe became communicative as he ate his buttered muffin. "He is down here to sketch, to produce *crépuscules, lever-de-soleils, tricoteuses, études*, and all that sort of thing. But really," he added, judicially, "he seems a very decent sort of fellow, and he knows some people we know. He's a New Yorker by birth and more or less of a cosmopolitan by training. You interest yourself in art and artists, so perhaps you have heard of him—Henry Morely."

Annette speared a slice of lemon and dropped it into her tea. Then she answered: "I believe I have. Is he a soulful soul, devoted to his art?"

Cliffe smiled. "He might be induced to look at a girl if she were pretty, I should say."

"I suppose you told him about me."

"No," he said, "I didn't. I asked him to come around, but I left you for the unexpected reward of his doing so."

She was silent for a time as she sat looking out of the window over the lilac bushes and a blossoming apple tree to the sunset-flushed sky.

"I think I shall help Mr. Morely in his study of the peasantry," she said at length. "He can get society girls any day in London and at home. By the waters of the Loing he should confine himself to *paysannes*. Do you think I shall make a good *paysanne*? Wait and see."

And the next morning, when they came down to coffee on the vine-covered veranda that overlooked the valley, the river and the orchards far and near, they saw. She was dressed in the costume of the peasant girls, her face, neck and arms were darkened, her brown hair hung in two braids down her back and she greeted them in the patois of the *département*.

Cliffe did not understand. "What! you will ruin your skin with that stain!" he protested.

"*Qu'idée! Suis-je bête cependant?*" she asked, gaily.

"What are you doing?" pleaded her hostess, pathetically. She had known Annette many years, but had not yet come to the end of her caprices.

"Being a peasant," answered Annette, breaking her roll. "I went over to Suzon at dawn and borrowed these. Suzon and I have sentiments and interests in common. I have milked her cow and she has told me that she loves Petit Paul. I swore her to secrecy and to calling me Françoise. Will you both do the same?"

"But why?"

"Why? because in this garb of a beggar maiden I am going to broaden the artist's views about the peasantry."

Cliffe protested: "But you don't know him!"

"I shall. It is one of the advantages of the part. The simple and guileless child of nature reckes naught of introductions."

And when she had finished her coffee she slipped her feet into the huge sabots and clattered down the steps.

At breakfast she reported. She wore a spray of cherry blossoms in her hair, and her teeth gleamed white in contrast to the dark skin. "He has taken notice," she said; "he was reclining on the bank, making shift to read—as real poets and artists always do—and I rowed up the stream in Petit Paul's scow." She rubbed her round, bare arms ruefully in recollection of the strain. "He laid down the book and watched me. He *is* handsome! Suzon has quite entered into the spirit of the thing. She has promised me her aid, should I need it, and has given me her blessing. She said so while I dug in her garden."

That night her brown face and neck looked absurd above her dinner gown. "The life of the daughter of the soil is exhausting," she told them. "I am glad to rest. I browsed Petit Paul's goat near where he was sketching. George Sand would have reveled in me. He saw me again; not

only saw, but marked. To-morrow I shall speak to him."

And the next day, in the early dawn, she clumped down the pathway through the deep pink glory of the cherry orchard. The sky was faintly blue and the birds were singing among the blooms. The odor of lilacs was in all the morning air. She herself began to sing:

*"Ah! si j'avais un sou, tout rond,
Ah! si j'avais un sou, tout rond,
J'achèterais un blanc mouton."*

She broke off a spray of the blossoms for her hair and went on down to the banks of the Loing. There was bread in the pocket of her short blue skirt, and standing by the water's edge she called to the swans and fed them.

They came close to her, stretching and curving their necks, clapping their bills shut with gurgles of satisfaction.

Morely, coming along the path by the river, under the poplars, saw with keenest delight the picture of a slender peasant girl throwing crumbs to the swans that floated on the water; at her feet the silvery stream, above her the flushing sky of daybreak, and behind her the deep pink masses of the cherry orchard on the hill.

From under her long lashes Annette saw him approach, and for one instant she was afraid, was seized with a mighty desire to run away up the orchard path as fast as ever the sabots would permit. Then she looked up and smiled. "*Bojou, m'sieu,*" she said.

She knew better than to attempt the little curtsey of the histrionic peasant, but stood still with all the awkwardness she could assume.

Morely answered her fluently enough, though with an accent so deplorable that she could not resist a little *moue*. "*Bonjour, petite,*" he said, easily. "You are feeding the swans?"

"*Voui, m'sieu,*" she replied, plucking a fold of her skirt.

"May I help you?" he asked, holding out his hand for a scrap of the bread.

And together they threw crumbs to the swans of the Loing. Then they sat on the bank side by side, and the little peasant chattered volubly in her patois French. "I am called François. *C'mment t'appèles tu, m'sieu?*" she inquired.

"My name is Henri—Henri Morely."

She put her head on one side and looked at him. "Henri Moolee," she struggled to pronounce it.

"More-lee," he told her slowly, thinking the while that the lisping lips were as sweet and fresh as any bloom of the morning.

"And you are here for what?" she inquired, unabashed.

"To make pictures—to make a picture of you, if I may," he suggested, tentatively.

She laughed and shook her head. "You must paint Suzon—she is much prettier, Suzon."

"Impossible!" he made gallant and sincere reply. "You will be my model, will you not?"

"Model?" she questioned.

He explained. "You will stand there on the bank, just as you stood this morning, feeding the swans at sunrise, and I will make a picture of you."

"When that?" she asked.

"To-morrow, if you can."

She looked down at the ground and pulled a cowslip. "*Sais pas, m'sieu.* It is as you like."

Then she rose. Her sabots had a fashion of getting in each other's way, and gave her a truly rustic awkwardness.

"*Animal!*" she ejaculated, angrily, as one foot collided with the other.

Morely smiled. The *paysanne* had a temper of her own, clearly.

"I must go now," she told him, a regret permissible only for a simple child of nature in her voice.

He stood up. "I will go with you to your *chaumière*."

"*Oh, non, m'sieu!*" she cried, earnestly. "I live at the big house of the English gentleman, M'sieu Cliffe."

"Mr. Cliffe? But he is from America—from the United States—he is not English."

She looked puzzled. "America? where is that?" she asked, watching him with wide, ingenuous eyes.

"Never mind!" he laughed; "you are better for not knowing."

"I must milk the cow, or they will not have milk for the *petit déjeuner*," she explained, starting away.

He stopped her, his hand on her brown arm. "You will come, then, to-morrow morning?"

"To-morrow? To-day, if you wish. I am all the day by the river, under the trees, or in the garden with Suzon."

"I shall be on the river bank to-day also," he made answer, and stood watching her as she hurried up the path through the orchard and disappeared behind a clump of white lilacs. There was a slight, puzzled frown on his brow, but he was laughing.

"I have had speech with him," said the peasant, slipping her little feet from the sabots and rubbing them through the coarse, knitted stockings. "I was feeding the swans when he came down the path. It was very nice. If you must be a peasant it is as well to be one with an eye for effect. I am to pose for him to-morrow morning as first he saw me. And I made the most barefaced engagement to spend the day with him on the bank." She blushed through the stain at the recollection.

But she went back to the fields after she had drunk her coffee and had spent a comfortable half-hour, an incongruous figure curled up on the library couch, reading the *Galvani*.

"I have to be so simple-minded," she complained, as she went out. "It is a hideous strain. I talk garlic beds and cows when I am dying to discuss the academic influence and the future of France. The effort of seeming wise is as naught to that of seeming systematically a fool."

She threw herself prone on the grass under an apple tree. "We must vary the cherry background occasionally," she decided, and waited, digging in the earth with the toe of her sabot and making little wreaths of the grasses and violets.

It was long before Morely appeared. Annette grew indignant, and was on the point of going away. "It is what comes of being eager," she soliloquized, and impatiently rolled over on her back, gazing up into the tree. "If I could only have a book I shouldn't mind so much."

When Morely arrived he carried a volume of new verse she had been longing to see. Instinctively she reached for it. He put it into her hand with a smile. She turned over the leaves. "Can you read it?" she asked.

"A little," he told her. "Can't you?"

"I can read French," she said, proudly. "The curé taught me. But I cannot read this." She studied it with her lips pursed and her forehead wrinkled. "Is it English?" she asked.

But presently she forgot, and fell to discussing, with deep interest, subjects much too abstruse for the peasant mind. She sat up with her hands clasped round her knees, bending forward, her face grave.

They had begun by talking of Suzon and Petit Paul. She sketched their pastoral love better than she guessed. "They are so simple about it," she explained. "They have no doubts. He knows that he loves her, and she knows that she loves him. After all is said and done, civilization can't give one anything as good as that—while it lasts." She stopped short at his look of blank astonishment.

"Why, you are a philosopher," he said.

She laughed and looked down. "What is that?" she inquired. "I repeat only what the curé says."

He seemed satisfied, and she was saved from further explanation by the sight of Cliffe coming toward them along the bank. Her heart sank. She foresaw that his purposes were not peaceable.

He came up to them and stopped, running his hands deep into the pockets of his smoking-jacket. Of Annette he took no notice; but he

greeted Morely. "Is this an *étude*, if I may ask?" he said, smiling quizzically.

The young fellow laughed. "It is a *pastorale*," he answered, "and as an experience it is distinctly novel."

"It is as old as the dryads, on the contrary. Don't let it go too far. These guileless rustics are susceptible."

Annette grew crimson, and darted a furious glance. He went on undisimayed: "Can you understand her patois?"

"Occasionally I miss a word."

"She is our dairymaid, you know," Cliffe explained. "When we came down here and rented this place I hired her because I thought she would look well around the premises. She is picturesque enough," he added, "but she is not worth much."

Annette bit the head off a violet.

Morely glanced at her. "Probably, like the more instructed, she thinks beauty fulfils its mission by being beautiful. She doesn't understand English, I take it."

"Not a word," Cliffe assured him. "I think you made an impression, Morely. Mrs. Cliffe heard her talking to the cook. She rejoiced that no mustache hid your red lips, and she liked your eyes."

It was Morely's turn to flush. "The deuce she did! My 'expressive, purple eyes,' I suppose." He looked uncomfortable.

"Are you going to philander all day on these mossy banks?" Cliffe asked. "We should be delighted to have you come up to breakfast."

Morely accepted. "This young person," he said, "hasn't any of the false notions of more advanced society. If she thinks she would enjoy a morning with a fellow, she lets him know it. I am ignorant of the customs hereabouts. My training hampers me in becoming a child of nature all at once. Is one expected to give an occasional chaste salute, and that sort of thing?"

"I rather think it is the proper line of conduct. It's largely a personal

matter, however, and you can't tell until you try."

Annette rose to her feet, and giving Cliffe a withering look, strolled down to the riverside.

Cliffe glanced after her. "I am inclined to believe," he said, "that she resents my intrusion on the bucolic tête-à-tête. We breakfast at twelve." And he loitered away.

"The beauty of this game is that three can play at it," he murmured as he passed Annette. She deigned no reply. He chuckled. "You will have to eat your breakfast in the kitchen, Françoise."

"*Françoise, arrive donc!*" Morely called, complacently. She gave no sign of hearing. "Come back, little one," he repeated.

"I am going," she answered, pouting.

"Not yet." He rose lazily and went down to her. "Don't go yet. Sit here and talk to me. Your master will not mind."

"What did he say when you spoke English?" she inquired, suspiciously.

"He said you were a very pretty dairymaid. Do you know that you *are* very pretty, Françoise?"

She cast down her eyes and simpered.

"You look very much like a girl I once knew," he added, and the tone of his voice changed suddenly, growing deeper with a note of memory. He threw a pebble into the water.

"Tell me about her," suggested the *paysanne*.

"Not much!" he answered, in good English.

"*Platt-il?*" she inquired, frowning in perplexity.

"I said it was not worth while." He laughed, but the spirit of the Springtide dallying seemed to have fled, and presently he stood up. "Your master asked me to breakfast with him," he said; "I must go. To-morrow at dawn, then, you will meet me here, and I will make a picture of you?"

"As m'sieu wishes," she answered.

The next day, at daybreak, she stood again by the river's edge, the

swans crowding toward her and the poplar leaves dancing and rustling above her head.

Morely, setting up his easel, fell to blocking in the dainty picture without the loss of many moments.

"You are a good model," he said at length, as he wiped his brushes and closed his color-box. "You throw yourself into the spirit of the thing awfully well." She gave a little sigh of fatigue, and going up the bank, dropped down on the grass under a tree. The deep pink petals drifted and floated over her and lay lightly on her hair. Morely joined her, leaning on one arm and looking up at her. "Are you tired?" he asked, gently.

"A little," she answered, poising a blossom on the tip of her finger and blowing it softly away.

"It's a thousand pities," he said, contemplatively, "that civilization spoils women so."

She looked at him with wide, blank eyes. He felt a vague satisfaction in talking sincerely to a pretty creature who did not understand, or even play at understanding.

"I dare say that when Jean or Jacques, or whoever he may be, shows you he loves you," he went on, "you will show him you love him, and the curé will marry you, and that will be the end of it. There won't be a thousand and one complications and fine points and hair splittings."

"M'sieu speaks French very well," she said, with sweet, unmoved stupidity.

"M'sieu has had it knocked into him—in place of much that was knocked out," he said, reverting to his native tongue. His eyes looked beyond her into the fluffy pink cloud overhead, and there followed a silence.

"How does m'sieu spell his name?" she asked.

He felt in his pocket and drew out a voluminous portfolio, and taking from it a card, gave it to her.

She stretched forth her hand for the pocketbook, and asked, innocently, "What's that?" No one would have

guessed it was the one thing of all others she desired to possess herself of just then. How could Morely know that she had had experience with portfolios? He did not know, so, having hesitated for only an instant, he let her have it.

With all the simplicity of a small child she fell to investigating its contents.

There were press notices of his work, a cut of one of his pictures taken from a Salon catalogue, scraps of paper on which were irrelevant scribbings—all the usual collection of treasures of the larger child.

She examined them carefully.

"I wonder what all the trash conveys to that little brain of yours?" Morely mused aloud in his own speech, as he watched her.

"*Plait-il?*" she asked, glancing up. She saw he was smiling, and smiled in return. "Is this a poem?" she asked, holding out a worn slip. He glanced at it and took it from her. "Did you write it?" she inquired.

He shook his head. "Not quite," he answered.

"Read it to me."

"You would not understand it."

"Because it is English?"

"Because of many things."

"Read it, *quand-même*. I should like to hear some English poetry," she coaxed.

And he read it, read it aloud, but to himself, for all that. It was Annette, now, who looked with absent eyes across the meadows.

"And she sends me back no token
From her home across the seas,
But I know, though naught is spoken,
That she thanks me on her knees.

"Yes, for pardon freely granted,
For she wronged me, understand,
And my life is disenchanted
As I wander through the land
Where the sorrows of dark morrows
Wait to take me by the hand.

"*Voilà!*" he finished, with a laugh.
"Do you like English poetry?"
"What is it about?" she asked.
"About a woman, of course."

"Do you love her?" asked the peasant, sympathetically.

"Do I love her?" he repeated, dreamily, looking away; and the question of the little *paysanne* was answered.

She went on searching the portfolio, and drew out a little dog-eared photograph: the face of a girl, young and sweet, whose happy eyes smiled up to her.

She looked her question.

"It is the one I told you of yesterday," Morely replied.

"The one who looks like me? Do I look like that?" She turned her dark little countenance to him.

"Very much," he said, "and not at all."

"What is her name?"

He was silent.

"Is she your *promise*?"

"No."

"But you said that you love her."

"I beg your pardon, I did not say that I love her. You reached that conclusion by yourself."

"Your eyes said it."

"Bother my eyes!"

It seemed to him that just the flicker of a smile came to the corners of the peasant girl's lips. She seemed to understand. "I was right?" she asked. "Tell me about her."

"There is nothing to tell."

"Is she married?" persisted Françoise.

"Not yet."

"Is she going to be married?"

"Yes."

"To you?"

"No, not to me. Have done, please!" he said, impatiently, reaching for the picture.

But she held it tightly. "Is she English?"

"American; but it is all the same to you."

"You are cross, m'sieu," and her blue eyes looked reproach.

He laughed shortly. "You ask too many questions, *petite*. If you were wiser you would know that there are some few things a man doesn't like to talk about. But then, if you were wiser you would not be—yourself."

"I think the English are not happy," she declared, as she slipped the photograph back into the pocket-book, which she returned to him.

"Why?" he asked. "Give us your views on the melancholy of the age."

She paid no heed to his lapses into his own tongue. "I know an English demoiselle," she continued, clasping her arms behind her head and lying back on the grass. "She was making a visit to Madame Cliffe when Madame and M'sieu first came here, a month ago. She talked French—better than you, m'sieu—and she told me that she was not happy. She said that she loved a young man, but she was not his fiancée. Do the English never marry the people they love?"

"Sometimes," he told her.

"Well, *you* do not, and *she* did not. She told me the story. This young man loved her. He did not tell her so, but she was sure, quite sure. He would have told her so, but he was not rich—she was very rich, *la demoiselle*—and her mother wished her to marry a man who was rich also. She was very sad, but her mother cried and scolded her and reproached her, and, in the end, she consented to marry a rich man. It was at a *fête* in America—"

"I thought you didn't know there was such a place as America, *ma mie*."

She considered him calmly, and then went on, disregarding the interruption. "It was in America, and her mother told the poor young man—who was an artist, the same as you, m'sieu—that her daughter was *fiancée* to the rich man. The artist went to the daughter and said, 'Is it true, that which your mother tells me?' And the demoiselle said, 'It is true.' And the artist went away that night, and she never saw him again. But the heart of the young girl was broken, and she told her mother she would never marry the rich man—never! never! And then she came to France; first to Paris and afterward to Montigny. But she was very unhappy."

Françoise was silent, and at length she stole a furtive glance at Morely

from the corners of her eyes. He was sitting up and quietly watching her. He did not speak. A bird began to sing over in the apple tree, and a peasant who was ploughing a field across the river called to his oxen. The sound came faintly to them.

"What was the young lady's name?" Morely asked, indifferently. There was not the flicker of understanding or of any emotion whatever in his face.

The little peasant sat up also and considered him. Was it possible? . . . She grew crimson.

"What was the young lady's name?" he repeated.

Françoise studied the pointed toes of her sabots and flushed yet more. "*S'appelait Annette*," she answered, sulkily.

"That was a very pretty name," he said, critically. "I can't see myself why she should have changed it to Françoise. Can you?"

She looked down, winding a brown braid about her fingers and shrugging her shoulders. "Perhaps she thought the young man did not like the name of Annette any more," she replied, demurely.

"He loves it," said Morely, emphatically. And then he dropped back into their own language. "I am ignorant of the customs hereabouts," he said. "Is one allowed to give a chaste salute to a rustic maiden?"

She sprang up and backed against the tree, but he was on his feet as quickly and caught both her hands in his own. A soft shower of cherry petals came drifting around them, and the bird in the apple tree sang wildly.

The peasant girl hung her head. "It's largely a personal matter," she whispered. "You never can tell till you try."



EMBARRASSING

DEAR, we do not meet as strangers.
 Many thousand years,
 Fraught with pleasures and with dangers,
 Hopes and smiles and tears,
 Draw us to a sweet communion,
 Bear us bliss untold,
 Whisper of a mystic union
 Ere the world was old.

As a rude yet wondrous being,
 In the Age of Stone
 First I saw you—with the seeing
 Lived for you alone.
 Death denied us. Other races
 Overspread the land.
 New-born 'mid the alien faces
 Still I sought your hand.

Now behold a fresh creation.
 As of old, you seem
 Like the longed-for consummation
 Of a tender dream.
 But we'll surely have to fix up
 Some more certain plan,
 For here's quite an awkward mix-up
 With another man!

EDWIN L. SABIN.

THE LOVES OF MR. HEATH

By Flora Bigelow Dodge

“IF you really want a good maid, you can have mine. She is leaving me because, she said, she could not stand the precedence. She used to live with a duchess, and I am only the wife of a baronet. So, you see, she has to walk in the servants’ hall almost last, instead of being first and addressed as ‘the Duchess.’ Poor thing! it has made her really ill! I quite understand her feelings, and hate to lose her. She wouldn’t mind, perhaps, if she were living with an American. You see, no Americans have really any position, and so, as long as you are fashionable and known to be a rich young widow, there is a certain dignity about the place she might like. I will ask her.”

Mrs. Lewis opened her clear, Yankee eyes and looked at Lady Bromley questioningly, to see if she should feel insulted by her ladyship’s patronizing manner and remarks, but the pretty, practical face, quite kind and utterly devoid of any humor, reassured her, and she dropped her eyes to count her rings again, saying, in her high, plaintive voice:

“Thank you very much, and if your maid thinks me good enough to live with, send her to my room this afternoon, just before dinner. Explain that I want to take her to America, and that the servants eat together there. You may add that I don’t want her to turn up her nose at me. Of course, we pay twice the wages.”

Lady Bromley nodded.

“I will warn her of every horror she may have to put up with. I have heard so much of America I feel quite as if I had been there. She is a little

airy, and inclined to overdress. English maids are getting impossible. You must be firm. Anything you don’t like in her, say it isn’t good form for smart servants in America, and she will be docile as a lamb. She will be delighted to have a rich mistress. The Duchess had nothing but beauty, poor thing! and, indeed, I have nothing—we often travel third-class when we’re alone—and she hates economy. She does the hair well, and can make you up if you are too tired to do it yourself—but I forgot; you don’t have a fringe, and your skin is all right.”

She looked at Mrs. Lewis’s small white face, with its pert outlines and high, well-shaped forehead, and wondered why everyone liked to look at a woman that really had no pretense to looks. Yet there was something that caught one’s imagination in the face; perhaps it was a resemblance to the head at the Louvre, “L’Inconnue,” that for ages has stopped the passers-by; or was it a dream in the motions of the slim, small figure, like a child’s in its vitality?

Lady Bromley had met her at this house party of her brother, the Earl of Rife, and had felt drawn to the little figure in her clinging black draperies from the time she saw her step out of the railway carriage. She was not aggressive, like some Americans, and had not been shopworn by London society. She seemed to slip into the hearts and homes of a few people and stay there, full of gratitude and sympathy.

Nobody knew much about her except that she was a rich young widow from Philadelphia, who had been conspicuous by being extremely fond of

her husband, and who was determined not to marry again. Wherefore, all the young men felt safe in talking to her, and were not afraid of being trapped into matrimony unawares.

Lady Bromley had taken her under her wing. She liked her, and it was her golden rule to be kind to those with money.

Mrs. Lewis was clever enough not to talk much to any one man, and devoted her energies to making the women like her. Every face was strange to her except her host's, who was an old friend of her husband and had stayed with them on Long Island in the early days of her marriage. He had met her by chance one morning walking in Hyde Park, and had insisted on her coming to his country place on the Thames to spend the following Sunday.

This was her first visit to an English country house, her first view of the Thames and Windsor, and here she knew her first experience in a punt and of drifting under the willows, through the rushes and past the swans, that seemed to know and resent every strange face; and all these first sensations were great events in Nancy Lewis's young and rather uneventful life.

Lady Bromley had come without her husband to Willowleigh, and several husbands had come without their wives. In addition, two or three young bachelors with prospects, who had escaped designing mammas up to the age of nearly thirty—a greater feat than to escape bullets in Africa—and two or three middle-aged *jeunes filles* made up the party.

One of the bachelors gloried in the name of Lord Tully O'Toole, which delighted Nancy; only she made the mistake of saying to him that his was the only name she had ever heard that would tempt her to change her own. He looked so worried and frightened that she felt obliged to tell him that she meant never to marry again, and least of all in England, whereupon they became very friendly, and he confided to her that she was

the most delightful American he had ever met.

"Why, my dear lady," he said, enthusiastically, "you have no end of charms, and if you were to attempt a refined way of speaking you would be quite different, and lose all your fascination."

Nancy opened her questioning eyes again; then they both laughed and were at once good friends.

When she went to her room that night Nancy thought over her two days' experience, and indulged in a kind of mental digestion before she went to sleep.

"What a strange people these are that speak our language," she said to herself, as she sat before the mirror in her low-necked batiste nightdress. "We interest them, but they aren't fond of us, and really don't think us as good as they are."

There were at least two women in the house more attractive than Lady Bromley. And there was a man with the charm of indifference. Mr. Heath was the only man who had seemed not to know she was there. He stepped on her foot going to play bridge, and looked so sorry when he said he was sorry that one felt remorse would keep him awake half the night. But she realized it was only manner—that maddening hypocrisy of the indifferent which they know how to employ so effectively.

She found herself making excuses for Cornwallis Heath. He was very busy in politics, and people said he would be Prime Minister—they said that of every man who didn't care about women, though. He was absent-minded because he had a cold in the head. Incidentally, he used the most hideous large silk handkerchiefs she had ever seen. No one except common day-laborers would use such handkerchiefs in America. But they must have their merits—so many Englishmen use them.

She thought of him for a long time, and drew with her finger the outlines of his profile in the dust of her mirror—the long, British upper lip, the drooping eyes, like those of a faith-

ful big dog, the set, square jaw. And then she thought of the large, loose-jointed figure that always dropped into the most comfortable chair in the room, and appeared as if nothing short of a boathook could get it out.

What was the fascination of this man, who had only said to her "So sorry!" for hurting her foot? She knew that he would not even recognize her in the street the next week. She stretched and yawned, and jumped into bed to dream she was in a punt with Cornwallis Heath, and that he forgot she was there and upset her to take a swim; and she called and called, but he only swam on, saying, "How delightful the water is, and how good for a man to swim!" She awoke in despair as her maid knocked at the door with her tea.

Different people took different trains, and Mrs. Lewis, who was afraid of being thought too clinging, got into a railway carriage alone and settled herself behind a large newspaper, wondering who would follow her. A man did, and shut the door behind him. She did not look up until the train had started. Mr. Heath's eyes met hers. No expression came into his face when he looked at her. He merely said:

"How nice that we are alone, for we both want to read! I know we are congenial; I feel it."

She smiled, and taking up her paper, read it upside down, with a thrill of pleasure that the ordinary way of reading a paper could never have given her. She was awfully afraid he would see she looked pleased, and of course he did see. She did not speak or move. After ten or fifteen minutes he said to her suddenly:

"I have an odd feeling about this train. I have a feeling about most things, but this is strange. Do you feel nervous?"

"Not at all," she answered; "not a bit. These English papers are such a mental strain that one hasn't time to get nervous. In the American

papers, after a little serious reading, one lubricates one's mind with a murder, a divorce case or social gossip, but here, Africa, China, Russia——"

The rest was not heard. There was a deafening crash. She cowered nearer to him, fell, and forgot her pain. She remembered nothing until she found herself stretched on a sofa in a country inn, with Mr. Heath looking out of a window near her. She tried to speak, but could not. She held out one hand; he seemed to feel the movement, and turned toward her.

"You are too ill to go farther. Your maid is hurt and many other people. You must stay here for a day or two. All the injured have been moved here. I will stay with you till evening, and will come to fetch you myself to London to-morrow. Poor little woman! Is your back bad?"

"No; only I can't move." Nancy smiled feebly. "What happened? Do tell me."

"We shall read all about it to-morrow in the papers," he answered. "Don't let's talk about it now. Fate seems to have thrown us together rather roughly, and we must talk of more interesting things. You have been half-dead for several hours. The Spring days are getting long, aren't they? Let us have a cup of tea. I will go to see about it."

In a few moments he returned.

"The proprietor was under the impression that you are my wife, so I registered as Mr. and Mrs. Peter Jones. My nerves are badly shaken, too, and I have taken the next room. We can spend a quiet evening here. I don't like to leave you this way. I have sent to see if any of your luggage can be found. I saw your full name on it, and was amused. The name will prove useful now in finding it. The housemaid can undress you. If they think we are married it will make less talk and be better in every way. Nobody knows you here, so nobody will be worried about you, except me."

Nancy smiled again—a charming, grateful smile—and he smiled back at

her—the first real smile she had seen on his face.

He did not speak again until the tea came. She couldn't sit up, so he held the cup for her. Then the doctor came to see "Mrs. Peter Jones," and said, in a sympathetic undertone:

"These accidents on bridal trips are particularly dangerous."

Nancy heard, but pretended not to hear. Mr. Heath did not change expression. He was glad to learn, he said, that her injuries were not serious.

After the doctor left, the two sat in silence for some time. Mr. Heath was the first to speak.

"Mrs. Lewis, this is rather an unconventional affair. Tell me, have I done as you wish, or shall I go to London and leave you here alone?"

He looked at her with his eyebrows raised slightly. She turned her head so that she might see his face better and answer him with her smile. Could anyone question anything he did, she wondered. There was a self-assurance about him that would carry conviction under any circumstances. He had planned and arranged, and everything must be right. She could not think much, but she felt she was happy and that he would take care of her. After the smile had left her face she still looked at him. His presence seemed to give her strength. He asked if he might smoke some cigarettes, and had a lamp brought in. Then they began to talk—in the British style of "questions."

"You like it here, of course? You would like to live here, wouldn't you?"

"No," she said, quickly. "I think Americans are happier living in their own country, unless they are married in England. I would like to come over every year for a short time. It is all strangely attractive to me, though I have no desire to go out much. I think you Englishmen are easier to talk to alone, you know."

"We are always simple," he said. "You Americans talk more, and you always think we don't feel because

we can't express our feelings, or don't want to, but we notice everything, and study everything, but don't talk about it."

A long pause followed. He turned his face away toward the window, and said, in a lower tone:

"I think we are less conventional than Americans are. We care less what people think, unless we are fond of them, and act more from our impulses. We are selfish and self-indulgent. You and I are drifting into talking more or less intimately, . . . ships that pass in the night, that salute, and may never cross again. . . . But you will remember the signal, and I shall, for we have known it in our dreams before."

She could not quite understand him, but did not like to say so, and simply waited for him to speak again. The strange strength of his voice was affecting her whole being. There was something so unconscious and casual, yet so earnest, about him.

"My dear lady, you think me a prig, but it is a great misfortune to feel the future and the present as much as I do—as I did the coming accident—as I did our meeting."

He stopped to light another cigarette and draw his chair closer to her before continuing.

"When a man of my temperament has lived to be forty, he is no longer his own master. You are still a child, though nearly thirty, I should say. You have cut your teeth, married, and been robbed of a natural protector by the Master, but you have no more lived than the stable across the street, which has been built, used, and had one coat of paint to preserve the timber. You have been built, used and preserved."

Another long silence ensued, and then he said:

"We have talked enough. I will read aloud to you for twenty minutes, and then you must go to bed."

He did not ask her if she would like to be read to, but took Tennyson's poems from the small shelf of books in the room, and sitting under the bad light, read her about the sor-

rows of the immortal Guinevere, selecting the parts he liked best. When he closed the book Nancy said, softly:

"Don't you think King Arthur was a little hard on her?"

He did not answer, but got up and looked at her as if he were thinking of something else.

"Good-night," he said, shortly. "I will see how you are in the morning and if you can go to London."

"Good-night," she said, gratefully.

The room seemed very empty after he had gone, and when the housemaid came in to help her get to bed, she realized that her head and back pained her considerably. She got into bed with difficulty, and pulled the sheet up over her head to say her prayers. Thus covered she felt less lonely.

The next afternoon they went to London. The journey was a great tax on her strength, and Mr. Heath went in search of Lady Bromley's maid, to see if she could come sooner than at first intended.

The days that followed were tedious and long. London in April is not particularly cheerful. Mrs. Lewis's few friends sent her messages of sympathy and Lady Bromley and Lord Rife came to see her, as she lay stretched out on a divan. Mr. Heath came late every afternoon for ten minutes, before dining, to ask how she was and see how she looked. He decided she looked attractive, and that most women are nicer as invalids than well.

She had been laid up for over a week after the accident. The last day she was sitting up in a chair and told him she was going to drive the next day; also, that she was going to a house party of Lady Bromley's the following week.

"Perhaps you are going?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "I am very busy at the House now, and I seldom visit anywhere. I usually go to my own place for Sundays. You will come there, perhaps, the next week after? Lady Bromley is a kind, nice woman, but I don't care for most of

her friends; in fact, I don't care much for anyone's selection of friends, and like to make my own, and keep them a great deal about me. I want you to meet a great friend of mine, Lady O'Brien. She has asked me to arrange it. I have known her for years, and she has been of great assistance to me in my career—a fact I can never forget."

Nancy felt at once that she should hate Lady O'Brien, but said, sweetly: "The name is not French."

He laughed. "Not exactly. She is *very* Irish, and talks with a bit of a brogue. She is one of the cleverest women in England, and one of the most beautiful—or, rather, was. She is a bit older than I am, and has lost her first bloom, but ten years ago—ah, she was lovely then! I shall never forget the first time I saw her, riding on an Irish car in a purple homespun, with a knot of black velvet in her red-gold hair. She had the kind of face that made one think any nose without freckles was a failure, like steak without salt. I don't think she would like my comparing her nose to a steak, but I am not a poet. You, I am sure, follow my meaning."

"Yes," answered Nancy, dreamily, thinking herself a fool to have worn veils in the sun when in America. She might have had freckles, too, if she had but known what power they have over some people.

"Now that you are well, I suppose I shall not see you as much," he said, half-regretfully.

She was too proud to say anything but "I suppose not."

"And you will come to stay with me, Sunday after next?"

"Yes; but I am sorry you aren't coming to Bromnest this Sunday."

"It is nice of you to say so, but I rather feel I should be bored. I am not a society man. Good-bye."

II

So Nancy got well in spite of the rains and seeing little of Mr. Heath.

She rode in the mornings and studied. Lady Bromley took her to a few concerts, as they were both fond of music, and on the days she spent alone she was quite contented. She had left America to be away from people, and a quiet life was what she desired. The loneliness in a strange land does not compare to the loneliness felt in familiar surroundings when we miss those we most care for, and the companion of her childhood, whom she had married and with whom she had lived happily for five years, she missed more from habit than from any violent emotion. She felt a strange new affection that almost frightened her. She could not understand it. It did not mean that she loved Dick's memory less—in fact, she wished Dick were there, that she might talk of Mr. Heath to him. How Dick would have liked him! Dick always liked the type of man that attracted her, and they always talked over things and people together with the frankness of two simple, congenial natures that have nothing to hide—the frankness that is the root of many happy marriages, unless, perchance, stronger emotions sweep husband or wife out to sea; but Dick had died before anything of that kind happened to either of them, and Nancy mourned him deeply for a year, and still missed his protection and sympathy.

Her understanding of the male nature was limited, and her likes and dislikes were strong and spontaneous.

She wondered whether Mr. Heath liked her or not. If he did, he betrayed the fact very little; and if he didn't, why did he watch her so and take care of her when she was helpless, as if she were a little child? Yet now she saw scarcely anything of him.

One afternoon he brought Lord Tully O'Toole to see her, and one night he gave a dinner for her at Willis's, where six of them partook of viands that cost twice what they were worth, and listened to indifferent music.

Mr. Heath seemed to know every-

one dining there, and the headwaiter, with a beamish bow, bustled up to ask after his health, observing that he had not been there lately, and that his speech of the week before had been "a noble effort."

The Duke and Duchess of Kew, Lady O'Brien and Lord Rife made up the party. The Duchess was shy and quiet, and watched Nancy with interest, giving her an encouraging smile when their eyes met; but Nancy talked little to anyone except Mr. Heath. Poor Nancy understood so little of politics, and was ashamed to ask questions showing how ignorant she really was. Lady O'Brien sat on the other side of Mr. Heath and talked and listened with that intensity which is such a charm of the Irish. She talked across to the Duchess about their mutual interest in improving the condition of the poor in Ireland. How much these women did for their people, how much they knew, and what executive ability they possessed! Nancy made mental resolutions to go back to Long Island and do something to stir up the country people there. She felt smaller and humbler the more she listened.

Soon the little Duke distracted her. He had a great weakness for Americans, he said, and had the tact to introduce topics on which he felt she might be more at home. They got on beautifully, and she felt her spirits rising again.

When dinner was nearly ended he asked:

"Have you ever met Lady O'Brien before?"

"No," said Nancy; "I have heard of her. She is very clever and fascinating, isn't she?"

"Well, she has never tried to fascinate me. I personally don't care for women too clever; she is so bright she tires me. I like a woman to make *me* feel clever, and no very clever woman really could." His eyes twinkled a sidelong glance at Nancy, and he continued:

"I like her. She is a neighbor of ours in the country, and does a great deal for the people, carrying on end-

less flirtations at the same time. She is a wonder. Of course, you know Cornwallis Heath has been in love with her for years. She did him good for a while, but now I think he has outgrown her, and wishes he were free; yet he is too loyal to give her up, and she would not let him share her with anyone. I have known him since he was a little boy. He cares nothing for society, and is very ambitious. She made a set for him over ten years ago, throwing all her influence to his policies, and got a great hold on him in every way. He scarcely speaks to another woman. I was surprised to hear of his asking you to-night. I heard he had been attracted toward you a good deal, and so, I suppose, she insisted on meeting you."

Nancy felt the blood coming into her face. She looked over at Lady O'Brien and considered her critically. Her blue eyes looked a trifle washed out; the fire and passion still remained in them, but the poetry and finer sentiment of youth had all gone. Her figure was too full, but had good lines, and showed to advantage in the twinkling black gown she wore. Her nose was short and straight, and the famous freckles were only half-seen through the powder she used lavishly. Her mouth was distinctly coarse, but humorous, and her hands were red and bony. Nancy delighted in the fact, for her own little hands were her great pride and beauty.

She turned to the Duke.

"Has he ever wanted to marry, do you think—Mr. Heath, I mean?"

"I think not; but a man always begins to fret and worry when he feels he is closely watched and held on to—and *then* the woman ceases to charm him. One sees so much of that sort of thing, and Cornwallis Heath knows that, were he to be attentive to another woman, Lady O'Brien would probably make the woman suffer for it. Besides, I think he is the most loyal of men and the most indifferent. I fear I have said too much, anyway. As he is more or less of a stranger to you, all this can't interest you very

much. To all of us he is a public character, and he interests all English people who know him at all. He has wonderful physical fascinations."

"Indeed, he interests me very much. Before I met him I liked his face; and he has been very kind to me. I think him the loveliest man I ever met."

The Duke laughed. "You are quite delightful. What a Yankee expression that is! I see Lord Rife longing to talk to you, and I must not be selfish."

As they said good-night after the play Lady O'Brien came up to Nancy and asked her to lunch with her the next day. Nancy unconsciously looked up at Mr. Heath and accepted. Lady O'Brien saw the look and understood it.

The luncheon at Lady O'Brien's was very interesting. There were present several ladies of title, two young M. P.'s and Lord Tully O'Toole. Nobody paid much attention to Nancy. The women were gracious, and then forgot her; but she listened and absorbed a great deal, while she felt very dull beside these women of the world, with their power and ambitions.

Lady O'Brien asked Nancy to wait and drive with her after the others had gone. She was very affable, and told Nancy she was always at home at lunch time, and to drop in whenever she liked.

"I have heard Cornwallis Heath speak of you so often, and want to know all of his friends. He has been a friend of mine for years."

Then they talked of many things, and Nancy said she should not stay much longer in London; that she was going to the country, she thought, or Germany, after three weeks. They should meet again at Mr. Heath's place in Kent.

She was depressed when she got home. She felt small and insignificant and uninteresting, and wondered if her only charm was a physical one, for surely men liked her, and yet she could not talk and understand like these other women.

Lady Bromley's house party made

her less shy, and when she went to Thrypoole to spend Sunday with Mr. Heath she felt quite at home. Half of the guests she had met before, and the rest she felt sure she should like, from looking at them. Lady O'Brien watched her as a cat watches a mouse whenever Mr. Heath came near her. This was seldom, however.

The day had been too hot for people to feel very energetic. After dinner the party played bridge. Nancy could not play, but watched the first night, and Sunday night two or three others preferred to sit out and talk rather than play. Mr. Heath came up to her and asked if she would like to go into the conservatory and talk to him.

She rose and followed him without answering. However, they did not stop in the conservatory, but walked on slowly down the gravel path into the dark shelter of the pine woods.

They walked in silence, the leaves murmuring gently above them. Nancy felt troubled, and wished she had not come out. She looked up when she felt him looking at her.

"Let us sit down on this old wooden bench—it is my favorite place here in the garden," he said, taking her hand as he spoke to draw her down beside him.

She withdrew it quickly, as soon as they were seated, as if the touch hurt her. He watched her pale, upturned face with the weird wood shadows trembling across it, and said, very softly:

"I want to tell you what I have never told a woman before. I want to tell you that I love you. I think you know it already, and I think I know you will say yes when I ask you to give yourself to me as my wife. Nancy, answer me."

He did not attempt to touch her again, but she felt his whole being tremble. She could not speak, but with a sudden impulse on the part of both, they leaned toward each other, and she threw her arms about his neck, and their lips met. Thus she answered him. Then, in a moment, she drew away.

"How did you know I cared for you?" she asked. "I had not even told myself."

He laughed. "Had you told yourself, you would not have acknowledged to yourself that you told the truth. You are so proud. I knew you through and through after three days. Then I had to question myself and make up my mind if I wanted to marry. I knew I wanted to marry, but I had to decide if it was best. You know I am very outspoken."

Just then footsteps were heard. Lady O'Brien and Lord Tully O'Toole appeared and joined them, and somehow, as they all started back, Nancy found herself walking with Lord O'Toole, and Lady O'Brien and Mr. Heath were almost lost in the darkness behind. His lordship turned to look back at them once, and laughingly said:

"Glad I'm not in *his* shoes! He's catching it. She never lets anything fly after she has once clipped its wings."

"Is she in love with him?" Nancy asked.

"Yes. I think he is the only man she has cared for. Of course, she has had scores of affairs, and been proud of them, but he was a big fish to land. She never got him very tight, and has always been uneasy about him."

"Was he in love with her?" she asked, faintly.

"Not a bit. He was flattered, and he is grateful for all she has been to him, and all she has done for him, which is much, but I doubt if he ever even pretended to care for her."

"Of course, he wouldn't pretend anything he didn't feel," Nancy said, proudly.

"No, I don't think he would. He is very true. I have never known of his doing a thing that wasn't true and straight."

"Would Lady O'Brien feel unhappy if he married, do you think?"

"Mad is a better word, perhaps. You see, while she has had her affair with him there have been others, and he knows it, so she has no real claim

on him. He knows that, too. But he is the kind of man who would stand by a woman under most circumstances. He has very high principles about all these things—absurdly high, really, because women take advantage of one. If I had those ideas, with my temperament, I should be—goodness knows where—in an awful mess.”

He spoke very feelingly. Nancy sighed.

“I don’t understand English society,” she said.

“No Americans do that are attractive. We like you when you are different, not when tamed.”

She laughed and reminded him of one of his first tactful speeches to her. They then went in silence to the house.

She said good-night to him, and slipping up to her room, sat in the window, waiting to hear the footsteps of the others come up the path.

Presently she put on her dressing-gown and turned out the lights. Resuming her seat, she fell to dreaming of the future. Would that be her room, she wondered. She would begin to grapple politics in the morning. Would he find her very dull? How could she ever help him about anything—she who had never had an ambition—and if he wanted to be Viceroy of India or Prime Minister, what could she do? Nothing but love him, and kiss him again and again.

For the first time she felt herself a woman.

The figures at last approached. They paused a moment in the moonlight just outside the conservatory. Then Lady O’Brien came into the house. He remained outside, walking slowly up and down the path, his head bowed and his hands clasped behind him.

She watched him and longed to go to him. She wondered if she should ever dare to touch him or go to him unless he asked her to, she stood so much in awe of him. Most people were in awe of him, she found.

A loud knock roused her from her reverie. Turning up the lights, she

ran over and opened the door, to find Lady O’Brien asking to come and talk to her.

“Of course,” said Nancy, drawing up the biggest chair for her, and placing a stool near it for herself. She sat hugging her knees and looking up into the older woman’s face, waiting for her to speak.

“Mrs. Lewis, I have come to you in my trouble, as I think one woman has a right to go to another. I feel you must know that Cornwallis Heath has been a friend of mine for years. All the world has known it. All my friends have warned me of the awful end I now see at hand. He is a man of great ambitions, great courage and perseverance, and cold-blooded as a fish. I must honestly say he never pretended to be in love with me. Never in the height of our passion has he ever pretended to feel anything he did not, but he cared for me as much as he could care for any woman. He found me useful to him in a thousand ways, and I was just as ambitious for him as he was for himself. He is the only being in this world, except myself, I have ever loved. My husband I married very young; he was an invalid—a most unpleasant one—and still is. I never cared much for my six children, and never pretended to. My life has been more useful in my community than the lives of a dozen better women, who do nothing for their fellow creatures but breed. I have made my husband proud of me and as happy as his constitution allows. I have done no end for the industries of Ireland, and to help my men friends in their careers, particularly Cornwallis Heath, for whom I have done more than anyone, who is all I have to live for, and whom I cannot, will not, lose. I love him as only older women can love; I appreciate him as only a woman who has had other lovers knows how to appreciate a man——”

“Don’t say that!” cried Nancy; “that isn’t true—oh, don’t!”

“I mean just what I say. You can’t love as I do. A man may love

a woman like you more than he loves me, but *you* can't love him as *I* do. You are only a child. He has only just come into your life. He has been *all* my life for ten years. I knew he was going to ask you to marry him, and when I questioned him to-night he admitted he had asked you. It has nearly killed me. I do not mean to threaten, as many women in my position would do. I shall harm neither of you any more than I can help, as a very unhappy and jealous woman, but I want you to look at the facts fairly, and not just dream of yourself as a Viceroy's wife in India and admitted to the Queen's friendship on account of your husband. You are marrying a man who is, first, marrying you because he believes that at forty a man should think of marriage and of having an heir. Then he wants you because you are rich, as he needs money in his career, and because he thinks you would be a *good* mother for his children. You are healthy, well born and pure——"

"So I should," interrupted Nancy. "I should love to be the mother of his children above all things, and should be so proud—so proud and happy."

Lady O'Brien looked at her half-pityingly and half-sadly. She leaned forward, and laying one arm over Nancy's shoulder, said, in a voice that trembled slightly:

"I came to your room to-night only to make you think, my child. You can't hold him! You aren't the woman for him, and if you take him from me now you have robbed me of the one joy in my life—the one thing above all others that I have to live for—the treasure that has been mine for ten years. How would you feel in my place?"

Nancy felt her eyelids quiver. All the emotion of her sensitive nature was roused. To see Lady O'Brien humiliate herself in this manner was in itself more than she could understand. How much she must have suffered before she could do it, thought Nancy. She felt how much he meant to her, and measured Lady O'Brien's love with her own. The two women

could never have understood each other.

Lady O'Brien rose, and drawing Nancy to her, kissed her forehead. "Good-night," she said; "I don't ask you to promise me, I only ask you to think," and she went away, leaving Nancy to creep softly to the window to look out and see that no one was walking on the path; then she went to bed and cried herself to sleep after an unfinished prayer.

III

THRYPOOLE, after two years, seemed more beautiful than ever in the green of its shade and the gold of its sunlight. Mr. Heath entertained better than any other bachelor in England, it was said, and there was a big house party on.

Lady O'Brien was there to make herself agreeable to the Prime Minister and laugh at his little jokes. He liked to be flippant when off for a Sunday.

Lord Tully O'Toole was there, too, with his Chicago bride, whom he was busy getting "house-broken," as he delicately put it, and she now had modulated her voice so that not more than six people could hear what she said to the man next her at table, which was a great improvement. Her r-r-r's still came out with the unmistakable Western burr, however, and these had rather been given up as incurable. She was a dear girl, and there was lots of her. One can't have too much of a really good thing, after all.

After breakfast Sunday morning five or six of the party were sitting on the terrace chatting over their papers, and Lord O'Toole, who always had the faculty of bringing up subjects that most people preferred to avoid, asked cheerily:

"I say, Cornwallis, what has become of that delightful little widow that was here two years ago—Mrs. Something, with the white skin and queer little nose chopped off on the bias? I thought you were going to marry her."

Mr. Heath did not raise his eyes, but coloring slightly, said simply:

"I thought so, too."

They all laughed, the answer was so deliciously honest.

Lady Bromley asked, sympathetically: "What happened, Cornwallis—as long as the ice is broken? I am dying to know. Surely she didn't refuse you?"

"Oh, no!" he answered. "She just said she was not going to marry at all. She gave no other reason. She promised me she would not marry anyone else—that isn't a refusal. We are the best of friends. She sailed soon after she was here. I saw her only once or twice after that. We correspond regularly twice a month. She cabled me a few days ago on my appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, so I feel she is interested. She was a nice woman."

The Western bride opened her eyes wide with amazement. "Well, if that don't beat the bugs!" she exclaimed.

"Never say 'bugs!'" groaned her husband.

She smiled good-naturedly and went on: "You English are too funny! Why, in the States a man wouldn't be writing to a woman two years that preferred her dead husband to him. You are all so cold-blooded. I don't believe any of you care if you marry or not, and you would just as soon marry one as another—slight preference for the white," she ended, drawing in a long breath excitedly.

"You are quite wrong," answered Mr. Heath, quietly; "men would not just as soon marry one as another, but a man may be fond of different women in different ways. There are so *many* women, remember that, and no man has time enough in a busy life to let a woman be of first importance to him. It isn't that he loves her less than the ardent lover who thinks of nothing else, but that he loves other things more, do you see? I don't mind in the least speaking of Mrs. Lewis. As all my friends know I have the deepest respect and affection for her. Whether she marries me is

of very little importance. I am glad to know her, and am proud to feel she is a friend. What her reasons are for not marrying are none of my business, and I know nothing about them, not being curious."

Lady O'Brien listened, though she pretended to be counting stitches in her knitting. She had never spoken to Mr. Heath about Nancy after that night in the garden. She had, in fact, not seen him very often, as he seemed more absorbed in his politics each year. Just now she felt uncomfortable and a little remorseful.

"Well," said Lady Bromley, "she was strangely attractive—why, I don't know, for she talked very little, was rather shy, and hadn't much brains, though a sense of humor, certainly. She was rather a weak character, I thought. My maid said she was nice to live with. That kind of woman is always adored by servants—the 'Housemaids' Idol' style."

Lady O'Brien put down her knitting for a moment and said, quietly: "Mrs. Lewis has great strength of character, I think, and the real organ the poets call heart." Then she resumed her work.

Mr. Heath looked puzzled, but said: "Well, now that I am Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, I hope she will come to pay me a visit this Summer. I have written to ask her."

Lady O'Toole laughed—her usual prelude to her remarks—and asked: "Shall we all have to curtsy to you, and treat you very grandly, and walk behind you through doors, in Ireland? How foolish you will feel, when the same people are used to calling you by your first name! But I suppose it's all right, because you represent the Queen. What a funny country this is! Well, I'll camp on your trail, wherever you go. I like the things you do, and the way you do 'em."

Mr. Heath smiled indulgently. Just then a footman brought out a cable message and handed it to him.

He read it over several times with no change of expression on his face that anyone could discern, except Lady O'Brien, who saw the pain in

his eyes. The others wandered away in pairs through the garden.

Mr. Heath started back toward the house alone. Lady O'Brien followed him, and, laying one hand gently on his arm, said:

"Cornwallis, isn't she coming?" He shook his head and, drawing his arm away, walked on.

Lady O'Brien stood still in the shade of the rose trees for a few moments, and then went up to her room to write a letter. She wrote rapidly, and reflected on her words afterward. She thought of Nancy's delight at receiving it. Nancy had done the most for her that one woman could for another, and now she would do what she could for Nancy.

"She will believe I don't love him any more, and want them to marry. Well, I'll be a friend to both, and knit socks for the babies. Men always tire of us in the end, unless we do the heroic, or get tired of them first. Cornwallis never was in love with me. He was always honest, and—himself. I should like him to be really very happy. I don't know myself like this—my liver must be out of order, I feel so unselfish and unnatural."

She walked over and sat down by her dressing-table, and looking into the glass, continued aloud:

"Well, good-bye, my dear self. I have tried for the first time to look for someone else's happiness first. I must indeed be growing old."

She looked long into the mirror with absorbed interest. It seemed as if the eyes of her body had met the eyes of her soul for the first time.

A loud knock startled her. She opened the door and found Cornwallis Heath.

She had never seen him look really unhappy before. His eyes fell on the letter in her hand.

"What are you writing to her about?" he asked, quickly.

"To tell her that she must come over at once and marry you; that you are so in love with her you can't live without her."

His face flushed, and he said, "Nonsense!" but he looked pleased.

"Come, Cornwallis, I want to talk to you. Take me into your study. I will make you a disagreeable confession, and you must send a cable to America at once, saying 'Will you marry me in three weeks?'—or something like that, and sign your name, and I will send one at the same time (which you can pay for, too) like this: 'You must marry Cornwallis Heath at once. Everything settled. I am busy elsewhere.—O'BRIEN.' In forty-eight hours you will get an answer that will make you—well, less reserved!"

As she talked she slipped her arm through his and led him across the hall to his sitting-room and to the sofa by the window, where she seated herself beside him. He looked completely bewildered, but said nothing.

"I have stood between you and Nancy," she went on, "and I am ashamed of myself now. I didn't realize you were so much in love with her. I understand everything now, and as for *her*, I know she is so in love with you she doesn't know the difference between you and heaven. You shall have her, and she is the only woman I know good enough for you. Now, here's a pad and pencil; write your cable."

She sprang up, handed him the materials and pressed the bell. Then, after reading the two cables aloud, handed them to the footman, with instructions to have them sent at once.

The door shut, and they looked silently at each other a moment. He took her hand and kissed it, then got up to look out of the window. She left the room so quietly, while his back was turned, that he did not hear the door close behind her.

Lady O'Brien and Lady O'Toole decided to remain until Tuesday for a day's rest after the other guests had departed.

Just as they were waiting to start for the train, in the morning, Mr. Heath walked in leisurely from the garden, and handing Lady O'Brien a beautiful red rose, said, "I have had

a cable this morning that will interest you." He then took from his pocket a thumb-worn bit of paper and read aloud, "Yes. Yours, Nancy."

Lady O'Brien clapped her hands in delight. Lady O'Toole nearly wrung his arm off, saying, "I am tickled to death—so glad you have really pro-

posed at last and got a decided answer. I like cable marriages, anyway. All nice things are sudden. Can we tell people?"

He smiled again his rare, beautiful smile, and said, gratefully:

"Tell *everyone* that I am the happiest man in England!"



CONTRAST

FROM your crystal glass you sip
The rarest wine;
Only bitter dregs and lees
Are left in mine.

The sweetest fruit is yours
In all the land;
To ashes mine has turned
Within my hand.

Your conquests you count o'er,
And little dream
My love is greater far
Than all they seem.

A thousand hearts are yours,
You care for none;
I'd give my life to have
The heart of one.

EDITH SESSIONS TUPPER.



BASELY DECEIVED HER

CARRIE—Why, I thought you were engaged to Dick?

FLORA—What led you to think so?

"That's what he told me before I accepted him."



THE PROBABLE EXPERT

SHE—I'd like to know who said "Woman is a delusion."

CHAPPIE—I don't know, Miss Dolly, unless it was "Jack the Hugger."

OVER LONDON BRIDGE

OVER the bridge to Surrey!
 Somehow the sun seems brighter there;
 Certain I am the maids are fair.
 Whisper the breezes everywhere,
 "Over the bridge to Surrey."

Over the bridge to Surrey!
 Ever it flows—the human tide,
 Wealth and poverty, side by side;
 The poor must walk, but the rich may ride,
 Over the bridge to Surrey.

Over the bridge to Surrey!
 With heart as light as heart can beat
 I hurry along the busy street;
 For this is the way to my love, my sweet,
 Over the bridge to Surrey!

ALBERT HARDY.



ON DANGEROUS GROUND

MR. SAPPIE—No thinking person would commit suicide.
 SHE—That's so. You want to be very careful, Mr. Sappie.



NOT GREATLY CHANGED

SHE—They say our new pastor was quite gay in his youth.
 HE—Yes, and from what I can gather he is wonderfully well preserved.



AT THE MUSICAL

HE was hired as piano soloist,
 For that was his vocation;
 But he found himself only accompanist
 For society's conversation.

A BURNING SHAME

By Andrew Comstock McKenzie

THE Honorable Randolph Burton was decidedly a young man of parts—two parts. The part that had landed him in Congress at thirty was earnest and aggressive, and made him a well-known figure at political conventions, at the Union League and on the platforms of the halls of labor organizations. The other part was the wealthy, society part, the part that owned the yacht *Elfrida* and the blue ribbon four-in-hand that he was driving to the Country Club this Spring afternoon with Mrs. Schuyler Remsen's house party on the seats behind and little Miss Ouray on the box beside him.

In his great, shy love for Beth Ouray the two parts of Burton's nature were strangely mixed. He loved her earnestly but not at all aggressively. This was because he did not dream that she loved him. Neither did he love her with his society side, although he met her altogether in society. With her he was quite different from the jovial Ranny Burton who was such a favorite on the polo field, the grand stand and the club piazza. Undoubtedly he was so quiet with her because he cared for her so tremendously, but she, knowing him to be an enterprising man in a man's world and an entertaining man in society, construed his constraint as placid indifference to her, and took frequent occasion to punish him for it. This was because she loved him; but a mere Congressman cannot be expected to understand the very excellent reasons a woman may have for sitting on the box seat with him and flirting constantly with a man behind her. So Burton withdrew pleasantly into his

shell and devoted himself to driving his four blue ribbons with great earnestness. Some of his turns, especially the turn from the Boulevard into Roden Lane, were marvels of exactness and would certainly have won profane commendation from Yuba Bill, if that gentleman had been present.

It was dusk when the groom swung down and ran to the heads of the leaders as Burton set his horses prancing up to the wide piazza of the Country Club. It was dark when they came out on the piazza after a dinner that did credit to Ranny Burton's gastronomic judgment. And yet it was not really dark, for a glorious full moon flooded the polo field and race track and streamed a broken radiance on the piazza through the interlacing branches of the elms.

After the little tables had been arranged so that the seltzer and ice and other comfortable things were near the gentlemen, someone suggested that the steward be coaxed to turn out the arc lights in the piazza roof, and that they sit in the moonlight.

Burton had begun well by blocking off Percy Hunt and installing his own chair next to the big wicker affair in which Beth Ouray reclined. Secretly, Miss Ouray had been glad, but she had taken pains to look a little annoyed, as women sometimes do from an instinct to keep humble before them the men they exalt in their hearts. The Honorable Randolph Burton, ruler of the Fifth District, was a hard man to bluff, but the Ranny Burton who loved the little Ouray girl was what is known as easy. He noted what she meant he should

note, and fell to talking politics to a homely man from Chicago, whose relations with Burton were more political than social. Burton made it a rule never to talk politics in society, but sitting by Beth Ouray in the moonlight flustered him. Their little group was somewhat apart from the rest.

"Are you gentlemen not going to smoke, too?" asked Miss Ouray, in a hard little voice. Being ignored by the man she loved was horribly significant to her.

"With your permission," Burton answered, calmly polite. He offered the Chicago man his cigar case. The Chicago man held his match carelessly, and the flame nipped his finger. He gave a startled exclamation and threw down the match so that it fell on Miss Ouray's skirt.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times!" he said, hastily. "But that infernal burn made me forget to look where I was throwing the thing."

"Yes?" said she, very coldly. She had grown to hate the Chicago man during the ten minutes Burton had talked to him instead of to her. Burton noted the tone and blundered to his companion's rescue, though he did not like the Chicago man in the least.

"I fancy you have never been burned, Miss Ouray," he said, laughingly. "I assure you it is something that no man can stand more than a second."

"Some men might," she said, a little vindictively. "For instance, a man with no more feeling than Mr. Randolph Burton might stand it two seconds."

"So you think I have no feelings?" asked Burton, bewildered and a little indignant.

The Chicago man at this point began to realize that the atmosphere was frosty, and he diplomatically swung his chair around to the other group.

"Let's see how much feeling you really have," said the girl, sitting up in her big chair. "Have you another match?"

Burton looked at her wonderingly, then handed her a match. She struck it deftly on the table by her side and

turned to him, her eyes sparkling in the flickering light. Without a word he held out a steady hand to her. She thrust the flame under his palm. When first the fire licked his flesh, he started a trifle with the instinctive shrinking of outraged nerves; but he pushed his hand back into the flame at once, grasping his wrist with his other hand for fear he might shrink again. Obeying some impulse they neither of them could ever explain, she held the match under his palm until it burned out. All this while he was gazing at her steadfastly, his lips pressed firmly together. When the match had flickered out she hastily threw it from her, leaned back in her chair and tried not to cry.

Burton was silent for some time. The pain of the burn was intense, but he did not mind that in the least. He felt very still and quiet inside, as if, deep within him, some solemn ceremony were being performed. He was not thinking any definite thoughts, and he did not try to analyze his emotions; he just felt strongly something sorrowful. At last he began to talk quietly, telling her about the polo game the Country Club was going to play with the Devons, and about some new ponies he had recently brought from Montana.

Miss Ouray contributed nothing to the conversation, for she dared not trust herself to speak. In a strangely accurate way she perceived that something had gone from his voice. She remembered, now that it was gone, that there had always been a certain gentleness, almost tenderness, in the way he used to talk to her. He was speaking coolly, with calm politeness, and she suddenly felt as if she had been put a great way from him. She realized that she had done something that had consequences to it, and yet she felt the hopelessness of trying to retrieve it. She could not excuse herself, even to herself. She knew that tears were in her eyes, and she was panic-stricken lest Burton should know. Altogether, Beth Ouray was about as miserable a pretty girl as ever sat on the Country Club piazza.

"Oh, Mr. Burton," she managed to say at last, "I am so sorry!"

"It's not worth mentioning," he answered, pleasantly. She longed for him to scold her. "It was merely a little joke. I had quite forgotten it."

She did not realize how long a burn smarts, but she knew very well that he had not forgotten it, because of the studied indifference in his voice. The tears were rising higher, and she felt desperately that she must do something to keep them down. Suddenly she rose from her chair and turned toward the far end of the piazza, which happened to be quite deserted. Burton jumped up, too.

"May I get something for you?" he asked; but she excused herself and fled along the piazza. The tears had overflowed. If the Honorable Randolph Burton had been as stupid in some things as he was in others, he would never have got to Congress.

Burton, watching her wonderingly, saw her call a waiter, who hurried away and returned almost immediately to hand her something. When the waiter had left her, he saw her make a quick little movement, and a lighted match flickered at the far end of the piazza.

"Great Scott!" Burton murmured, and made toward her in swift strides. Miss Beth Ouray was thrusting one pretty little forefinger into the blaze. Her face was white, and her parted lips showed white teeth tightly set. Her eyes were shining with tears. Every time the flame touched her finger she snatched away her hand, but immediately thrust it back into the flame and made no outcry.

"Good God, Beth!" cried Burton, unconsciously calling her by the name he gave her to himself. "Don't do that!" He promptly crushed out the flame in the grasp with which he seized her aching little hand. Then he did a tremendous thing, when you consider he was Randolph Burton. He bent over the hand he was holding, kissed it, and kept on kissing it.

"Poor little hand!" he said, very gently. "It must hurt horribly!"

"It's better now," she replied, demurely. She drew her hand back a little, but not very positively, and he did not make the mistake of letting the movement succeed.

"Why did you do such a dreadful thing?" he asked. His voice was still grave, but in it was the old gentleness.

"It was expiation," she answered, with eyes misty again. "It was because I had hurt you so wantonly. I don't know what made me burn you, and I felt so hopeless about making you really forgive me if I tried to tell you. I was afraid I might cry, anyway. Something made me run away from you to burn myself. I wanted to burn myself horribly, but it hurt so that I could not help pulling my finger away."

"But, my dear," he cried, patting her hand gently, "I would not have had you burn yourself for worlds. It was all right, anyway."

"No, it was not all right," she insisted.

"Well, it's all right now," he declared. "At least, the burn is all right." He reached out and captured her other hand—a fairly good move for him to make under the circumstances. "But you've hurt me in worse ways than with a match," he went on. "You've made me love you, and then you've flirted outrageously with that ass Hunt and with other men, too. What expiation are you going to make for these hurts, Beth?"

"What do you suggest, sir?" she said, softly, and a sudden color swept over the white of her face.

"It's only fair that you do penance for your sins by marrying me," he said, sturdily.

"But that's not penance," she whispered, and gave a happy little sigh.

Burton, still holding her hands, turned hastily and glanced down the piazza. Mrs. Schuyler Remsen was staring at them through a lorgnette.

"Let's stroll over to the stables and see about having the horses put into the coach," he said, insinuatingly.

"Do you need my help?" she said, shyly, and they both laughed.

"We are going over for the coach, Mrs. Remsen," he explained, as they passed the chaperon's group. "Will you please be ready in ten minutes?"

An hour later Burton drove up the avenue from the stables with a great flourish. Miss Beth Ouray was sitting on the box seat beside Burton, with her hand wrapped in a man's handkerchief.



IN AN EGYPTIAN GARDEN

CAN it be Winter elsewhere?
Forsooth, it seems not so!
The moonlight on the garden square
Must be the only snow,
For all about me, fragrant fair,
The blooms of Summer blow.

Wine-lipped and beautiful and bland,
The rose displays its dower;
The heavy-scented citron and
The stainless lily tower;
And whiter than a houri's hand,
El Fûl, the Arab flower.

In purple silhouette a palm
Lifts from a vine-wreathed plinth
Against a sky whose cloudless calm
Is hued like hyacinth;
And echoes with a bulbul's psalm
The jasmine labyrinth!

In life's tumultuous ocean swell
Here is a charmed isle;
I hear a late muezzin tell
His holy tale the while,
And like the faint note of a bell
The boat-songs of old Nile.

Across my spirit thrills no theme
That is not marvel-bright;
I see, within the lotus, gleam
The nectar of delight,
And tasting it, I drift and dream
Adown the glamourèd night!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



SAFE ENOUGH

"IT was Ajax, you know, who defied the lightning to strike."
"Oh, well, I suppose it had struck in that place once before."

THE SOFA WITH THE CLAW FEET

By John Regnault Ellyson

WHEN my wife—wrote Pompon in his “Book of Notes”—when my wife once caught the fever for antiques it developed rapidly. She filled the house with things that were old and odd. There were dull Japan jars and faded medallions, chimneypieces of the last century, huge curtained bedsteads, footstools covered with raveled green satin damask, and wonderful chairs in which nobody could sit. There were patches of moth-eaten tapestry and screens of all past styles, candelabra in glass or in silver gilt, and dusky landscapes, in which the rosy dawns were brown and the browns were black. There were old tarnished bronzes, specimens of old ivory and old enameled porcelain, vases of figured copper encrusted with verdigris, and cumbrous clocks that, undated and out of gear, ran at intervals and struck at strange hours. This extraordinary collection was an unfailing source of delight. In the midst of it I always felt very much like the placid Tom Burton in his junk-shop.

As long as my wife was possessed by this mania I lost no opportunity of picking up what I thought would please her—if it pleased me, for I, too, had my fancies in such matters. And so one day, in pursuit of my laudable purpose, I found myself at Cook’s auction rooms.

About the doors the crowd was laughing at Tom Burton—Tom of the yellow face and the sunburnt wig. On the preceding day Burton had purchased a pair of shoes belonging to the miscellaneous effects of the late Mr. Quills. They had scarcely been worn at all; were shapely, of excellent

make, and fitted their present owner perfectly; but the wags, pretending to be very nice and critical, chided him roughly, complained of their size and cut, protested against the price paid for them, and freely predicted evil adventures for the wearer of the dead man’s shoes. Coming up and catching the drift of the comment, I likewise had some pointed suggestions to offer. My sallies provoked fresh laughter, and for the moment it looked as if the placid Burton intended showing his teeth and making us a hot reply, but he wisely counted the odds against him and managed to slip out of view.

Half an hour later, when the sale began, the little incident was forgotten. Meanwhile, in one of the obscure corners of the wareroom I had discovered a very fine old sofa, and plumed myself on the discovery. Exceedingly large and covered with dark brown leather, the frame was of rich mahogany, unquestionably of the best handiwork, and rested on massive feet, modeled into the most beautiful tiger claws I have ever seen.

It was just what I wanted. With a buyer’s prudence I examined and admired it furtively, awaiting the moment when it should come under the hammer. In spite of my precautions, somebody got an inkling of my purpose and made me pay for my prize, for, when the sofa was offered, the bids ran up astonishingly from seven to a hundred and seven dollars—an amount exceeding its actual value. However, I had determined to possess it, and it was knocked down to me.

“Isn’t that my bid?” asked some person across the room.

I thought I knew the voice. I looked up and saw Tom Burton's yellow face and sunburnt wig.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Burton," answered the auctioneer, "but I took the bid from Mr. Pompon. Yours was one hundred and six dollars."

"Well, well," said I, loud enough to be fully heard, "well, I rather like this! But how did it happen? Ah, it's the effect of the shoes! They are beginning to lead the gentleman a rare dance!"

The crowd laughed and renewed their jibes at Burton.

We were dining when the sofa reached home. I had been at pains not to mention the purchase, but, when the wagon stopped at the door, I could contain myself no longer. I rose and rapidly explained everything in a few words, and even went and assisted the porters in getting the costly object into the front hallway.

My wife and son and daughter soon followed, and all of them expressed unfeigned delight. My wife was more than charmed. She immediately decided that it must go into the drawing-room; my daughter mentioned the dining-room, and my son, who had ideas of his own, thought no place so appropriate as the rear hall, which, added he, had long lacked something of the sort. For once I could not agree with any one of them, my mind being made up on the subject. They argued the point very pleasantly, I confess, while examining the purchase thoroughly and praising my taste and excellent judgment.

"Father, look here," said my son, down on his knees now before the sofa; "on the edge here is a roughness made by a knife blade—a scratch or a slight cut. See?"

"Nonsense!" said I, leaning forward and running my fingers along the leather; "nonsense! I feel nothing—I see nothing."

"I never saw handsomer claws," murmured my wife, herself a good judge of anything pointed.

"Ideal—perfectly ideal, madam,"

I answered, with pride. The phrase was unfortunate; my wife coughed.

"Papa, my dear, stand here," said my daughter, giving herself the air of a connoisseur before a masterpiece. "Look this way, as the light strikes in front of you."

"Well, I see nothing, my dear."

"What! Don't you see the stain there? It's surely a stain. Oh, papa! can it be blood?"

"Blood?" questioned my wife, bending her looks on me and darkening her brows.

"Blood!" cried I, "how very absurd!"

"Or wine," suggested my son.

"Look, father; it's a stain, but it may be a wine stain."

I thanked my son at heart for the notion he put into my head.

Seeing the turn of affairs, and remembering what a revolution such turns brought about in my household, I caught the hint and boldly aimed at creating a pleasing romantic interest by giving the sofa something of a history. There was no harm in the fable as I conceived it, but I should have chosen my words with greater care.

"I forgot to mention," I interposed, "I forgot to say, really, that the sofa once belonged to the mistress of a very rich old gambler——"

And here I paused. I noted a convulsive movement of my wife's whole frame.

"Mr. Pompon!" said my wife, speaking slowly but distinctly in a very high key. "There! end where you began, Mr. Pompon; not another word, I insist. And understand me, this thing shall never go into my parlor, sir—I wish you to be sure of that. Come, my child," she added, placing her arm about my daughter's waist, and the next moment she passed down the hall with a firm tread and a strange rustling sound as of imperial robes.

My son's impression of the scene and the feelings aroused differed from mine. He expressed himself in his peculiar way; he rolled over on the sofa and sobbed. I did not express myself; I was far too indignant.

"Truly, father," said my son a moment afterward, drawing his features into a grimace of ludicrous gravity and bringing his nose up from the edge of the sofa, "truly this precious antique has a very bad odor!"

The young fool saved his ears by slipping aside. He saw that I was in no amiable mood, and consequently he assumed a humbler manner. When I signified my intention of putting the sofa in place, he readily offered a hand.

Then together we bore the rather massive article into the library, where from the first I had decided it should go, and there we set it down before the closed folding-doors which divided that apartment from the parlor. The task so far was performed without any accident, though the room was somewhat dark; but in stepping backward I had the misfortune to run my heel through the mirror in the base of the bookcase, and in my effort to see what damage was done I turned very abruptly and upset the brass lamp and tripod at my elbow. The clattering confusion of sounds was followed by a series of sharp ejaculations from the room below.

The echoes in the air were hardly reassuring in my situation, which was deplorable, and yet might be worse. There was probably a storm rising; it was imperative that I should act quickly and with discretion. And I acted accordingly.

I walked into the hall, took up my hat and cane and left the house.

I passed the rest of the day and a few of the evening hours at Gerot's, where I gathered solace and balm in company with my friends—those old, convivial spirits, Jonquil and Bramble.

That night I got home late.

I was fumbling with my key when the door opened softly, and my daughter, slipping forward into the vestibule, detained me there affectionately. My daughter may be a little too emotional at times, but she is seldom hysterical and never perverse, like others of my household, and I was therefore surprised at this piece of sensationalism.

I felt that she quivered as she kissed me.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"Oh, nothing, father."

"You are trembling, my child."

"Ah, mother is sick—she has a frightful headache——"

"The result of the storm, I presume."

"Oh, father," she whispered, reproachfully, and then she changed her tone to one of sweetest supplication. "Dear papa, won't you tell me—do, I beg you—do tell me the history you began to tell us——"

"What—what history?"

"The history of the sofa."

"Oh, I've forgotten it," said I; and so I had.

"Dear, how can that be? Oh, papa, you're going to tell us? Was the young wife of the old man beautiful?"

"Well, yes—yes—she was very beautiful."

"You knew her, father?"

"I? No. I didn't say so."

"But how do you know she was so beautiful?"

"I saw her once—once, I think."

"Do tell me the history, dear—all of it. There's a fearful suspicion in my mind. I think the old—the——"

"The gambler?"

"Yes, papa. I think the old gambler murdered her——"

"What's that? What do you say? You amaze me! But there—there, my pet, rest perfectly easy—rest easy on that score. Why, the gambler died first!"

"Ah, I see; then she—it was she who murdered him!"

My daughter was weaving a better story than I could have woven, and, simple as her words were, the tone in which she uttered them and the tremor in her voice really chilled me.

"There, dear, what you say is all nonsense—it's veritable nonsense—worse than nonsense! Ha! ha! what folly!"

"I believe what I say, and I'll tell you why. I've told mamma nothing—it would have worked no good—but I've told brother, and he believes me.

He's now watching in the library. We've looked at the stain again, and we're sure—quite sure of it. There's a peculiar odor—you smell the leather, but the other odor's there, too."

"A wine stain, my child. Of course, you caught the odor of stale wine."

"Oh, father, I know the smell of wine! But listen—I haven't yet told you all."

My daughter, I admit, embarrassed me. The fact is, she seemed to know infinitely too much, and she was never more assertive.

"In the evening," said she, "before the gas was lighted, I came down stairs. I stopped here at the door and then walked down the hall, and as I passed the library I glanced that way. No, I saw nothing, father, but I heard—I heard a deep, deep sigh! It was so sad, so strange! I was so alarmed I could scarcely move, and I heard the sighing twice—distinctly——"

"The wind," said I; "the wind! Of course it was the wind!"

"I thought so, too, at first, but there was no air stirring, no wind blowing——"

"My child, now these are foolish, idle fancies! There's nothing in what you say—there's no tragedy connected with the history of the sofa. The gambler and his wife loved each other—they loved, they lived, they died—died just as others have died the world over for ages."

"Ah, papa, papa! I wish I could think so! . . . You said she died first?"

"Did I tell you that? Yes, I think she died first."

"And then he found life so bitter—so bitter, perhaps—perhaps he slew himself——"

"How eagerly you run on—how absurdly!" I exclaimed; then added: "But it's late, my dear; kiss me and go now to your room. Banish these notions, so idle and foolish! Go now—I have some important writing to do, and I shall remain in the library to-night."

And so saying, I led my daughter to the foot of the stairs. She left

me reluctantly, pausing twice on the steps and giving me long, lingering glances.

I closed the door of the hall, turned the key and lowered the gas.

The phantom of the gambler and his mistress, so curiously conjured up, I threw back to the devil as I stepped into the library, which, much to my surprise, was unlighted. I felt for my matchcase, secured a match and struck it, and as I did so I heard noises that sent a chilliness creeping up my spine—the movement of a chair, a footfall and a murmur of some kind. The half-lighted match flashed before my eyes and fell from my fingers, but by the flickering flame I could see for an instant the outlines of a figure, and the figure was approaching me.

I did not speak, but in moving aside slightly I caught my foot in a rug, and the accident brought me to my knees. I still held the matchbox, and, while attempting to open it again, I felt a touch on my shoulder.

"Now don't move!" said the voice at my ear; "don't strike the match—I have a reason!"

"And who are you?" I demanded.

"I, father! I've been watching here for hours."

"Watching? watching? You fools, you two precious fools! And what a pretty mess you're making here! Go! get to bed at once, sir!"

"Why, father, surely you can't ignore what sister says——"

"Not a word more! Pick up the matchcase—I've dropped it!"

"Father, let me tell you——"

"Hand me the matchcase, I say! You've heard something, too, I suppose," I added, with a sneer.

"I haven't heard much, but I know very well what I've seen."

"There you go! You've seen yourself in a mirror, and you're ready to swear it was somebody else!"

"No, I've made a discovery——"

"What discovery? You're imposed on!"

"I know what I've seen," he replied, doggedly.

"Tell me what you've seen—but

first open the matchcase and strike a light!"

"No, no! You strike the match yourself, but look at the sofa as you do so. That'll convince you. You'll see a strange white spot just where the blood stain is——"

"There's no blood stain," I protested.

"Oh, yes, I've seen it, and when you came in and the light flashed, I saw the spot again, and I also heard a voice——"

"'Twas mine—I made a remark, I remember," said I, settling that question at once.

And so, seizing the matchcase that my son proffered, I whipped out a match and lighted two burners of the chandelier. Turning round to view the sofa, I confess I gave a momentary start, but I recovered myself and laughed.

"Ha! there's your luminous spot, blockhead!" said I; "there! a mere reflection of the gas along the polished leather!"

The lad looked extremely puzzled.

"Now, get you to bed at once!" I said, sharply, and pointed to the door.

He quitted the room, but with a very poor grace, silently, sullenly, as if still in doubt.

Indeed, to be candid, I was in doubt myself on some points and somewhat impressed by so much harping on a single string. However, I must affirm emphatically that I am no spiritualist; for, since my experience with M. Poplon, the medium, I have had but scant faith in certain phases of the supernatural, and I have put myself on record as a skeptic, so far as concerns latter-day miracles and manifestations; but, if I am not a spiritualist, I am assuredly no materialist—though that accusation has often been leveled against me by my good wife.

I say I was impressed in a measure by the wild ideas of my son and daughter, and not altogether convinced that I had made them out sufficiently ridiculous. I admit I was, for the present, in no humor to sift these ideas and properly examine

them; in fact, I wished to get rid of them, if possible, one and all.

I was now alone in the library. Outside the noises of the street had died away, and indoors everything was still. I sought to divert my mind. I selected from the bookcase a volume of the comedies of Shakespeare. I placed the book on the table, just under the light, and dropped into my easychair, with my back toward the sofa with the claw feet.

But scarcely had I touched the seat when the peal of a bell rang out and ran along my nerves like the edge of a cool blade. I leaped up and glanced around me, and while I steadied myself against the table heard the sound repeated.

There are times when the most trivial circumstances conspire to make an intelligent being a prodigious fool, and here was such an occasion. The truth is that for the moment I failed to recognize a sound quite as familiar as my own voice—the voice of the clock in the hall. The clock was striking twelve.

After this fact dawned on me I felt as if a burden had been lifted—I felt immensely soothed and relieved. I sank back in my chair with a feeling of agreeable languor, a kind of pleasurable but profound lassitude. I assumed as well as I could an easy position, and for an hour or so I read and mused, or, lulled at intervals by the silence, closed my eyes and dozed. And once, while I was thus neither asleep nor awake, I became aware of a movement outside in the hall.

I was aroused; I listened. There was some object moving on the steps. I could not hear the tread of anyone, but the stair-rods and the rail rattled and the steps creaked. I remained in my chair, gazing into the hall at the space where the light from the room fell, and then in a moment there seemed to rise from the doorsill a female figure in a long white robe, over which the unbound hair flowed like a weird mantle.

I could not get upon my feet, nor could I speak, nor could I yet believe the vivid evidence of my own eyes.

The figure glided softly into the room and sank down at my knees. I must have looked exceedingly pale; certainly I felt cruelly humiliated.

"Has anything happened, papa?"

"Nothing, my dear," said I, embracing my daughter; "nothing in the world, my sweet girl—nothing, of course, has happened. How foolish you are! You must return to your chamber——"

"But I've had such a dream, papa——"

"There, there, my dear, no dreams; I'm no believer in dreams."

"Ah, and where's brother? Isn't he here with you?"

"He's in bed; and now go back to yours, my beauty. The windows are up, there's a breeze stirring, and you'll take cold."

"But brother—brother isn't in his room—the door's open—the bed's untouched."

"I understand," said I, and I gave one of my ideas the force of a fact; "I remember, now; you'd quite upset the poor boy—yes, I told him to sleep on the lounge in his mother's room. There," I added, in a gay tone, "now go to your chamber, my dear, and get all these follies out of your pretty head."

So I led her to the door very tenderly, very graciously. But when I resumed my seat I swore—I swore that I would consecrate the first act of the next day to the disposal of the sofa with the claw feet that had gone so far toward shattering my repose, and this resolution, couched in the boldest terms, eased my vexed spirit surprisingly.

I was very much myself once more. I lolled back in my chair and stretched out my legs, turned over the leaves of my book, read and nodded. And then suddenly I was brought to my feet again.

I heard a heavy breathing like that of someone struggling, followed by a fall as of a relaxed body. While listening, I looked around in every direction. The gas burned brightly. I had a clear view of all objects. There was, I own, nothing odd or unnatural

or unusual in the apartment. There was no change, no evidence of a struggle, and nothing had apparently fallen.

I stepped quickly into the hall, thinking that perhaps my daughter had lingered there and swooned. To my right I saw at my feet a bundled object, and as I stooped and grasped it I caught the whine of my son's voice.

"Why the devil are you here?" I demanded. "What are you doing?"

"Now, don't be nettled, father," said he, getting upon his legs. "I had my fears, and when you drove me from the room I crept here and slipped into the chair and watched till I fell asleep. A moment ago something clutched me by the throat, and I fell over on the floor and woke——"

I stopped the young man's tongue by laying my finger on his ear and leading him to the foot of the stairs. At a hint from me he mounted the steps speedily and without noise.

I reëntered the library, closed the door, threw myself into the chair, and then . . .

The sun was flashing in at the windows and the birds were twittering in the trees when my daughter's voice once more roused me. It was eight o'clock, and breakfast was ready.

Three hours later, at Cook's auction house, the sofa with the claw feet was again put under the hammer. Though the crowd, as usual on Saturdays, was large, there were only two bidders on the sofa—Tom Burton of the red wig and an undertaker named Figg. It was sold to Figg for seven dollars and thirty cents.

"My friend," said Burton, touching my sleeve and smiling, "didn't you lose by the little investment? To-day it seems nobody wants the thing. What a pity the story of it wasn't known yesterday!"

"And so it has a history!" said I, darting a lurid glance at his yellow face.

"Why, yes, of course! It's the sofa on which the governor's secretary committed suicide last Wednesday!"

RESURRECTION

STILLEST of all still things is Love.
The dead mouth smiles alway.
Is there no voice may bid him move,
No resurrection day?

Can no man waken this dead thing?
Can no man bid him rise,
Breathe life into the mouth's set ring,
Wake flame within the eyes?

Yea, there is one whose tender will
Had made the sleeper wake;
Yea, there is one whose voice could thrill
All death for his love's sake.

But dare I seek and beg him come,
Who have no right to ask,
And lead him to this dead Love's home,
And whisper him the task?

Oh, Love, my Love, that lies so white,
But one may waken thee,
May make the dulled ears hear aright,
May make the dimmed eyes see.

But till one comes, or soon or late,
Unasked, unsought, unled,
Dear God, the empty hours I wait
Dead-hearted by my dead!

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



HER LAST CHANCE

WIFE—I never knew what fear was, John.
HUSBAND—You were afraid to refuse me when I proposed to you, my dear.



HUSTLING NECESSARY

LENA—You've never heard anything bad about me, have you?
MAUDE—No; but it has been all I could do to keep from it.

FRIENDSHIP?

OUR lips have met—one barrier is broken,
 Although no word of tenderness was spoken.
 Should there on friendship such a seal be set?
 Our lips have met.

You say another claims your heart's devotion—
 That *her* glance holds the springs of your emotion—
 That she alone is all your life—and yet,
 Our lips have met.

O friend, are heart and brain so wide asunder?
 Are we cold lovers, or warm friends? I wonder!
 And as I wonder I cannot forget
 Our lips have met.

EDITH BIGELOW.



STILL CURIOUS

HE—I understand she married out of curiosity.
 SHE—Yes; and now she's curious to know how she's going to get a divorce.



SUCH A HASTY MAN

LENA—It's strange he should ask if I loved him.
 MAUDE—But you say you are engaged to him.
 "Quite true, but you forget I've only known him a week."



HIS MISTAKE

JACK—Fred says he thought twice before he married Miss Homeleigh.
 DAME—Great Scott! I wonder why he didn't take two looks, too, while he was at it!

THE BROKEN BATON

By Margaret Mary Hills

ELLIS VAN HORN sat in the roomy bay window of the Siegfried apartment, and in an introspective mood wondered how he had drifted into the artistic Bohemia of which he found himself a part. His mind hovered curiously round the vague tradition of an opera singer who, many generations ago, lived and died in some distant, collateral branch of the Van Horn family. It might be from her that he had received his "artistic temperament." At any rate, he found himself somewhat surprised at the semi-professional life he was leading, and asked himself how it would end.

A woman was singing scales in the room behind him. Her voice floated down to him from the silvery heights of tonic scales, and throbbed delicately through intricate double arpeggios and long trains of irregular thirds. After these came trills beginning in the middle voice and going up, step by step, higher by a semitone on each successive trill, and ending in a whimsical rush of exquisite staccato notes that made Van Horn think of fairy laughter.

"Why do you waste your strength and your time?" exclaimed an impatient masculine voice. "Can you not be serious? Now, on G."

The singer trilled obediently a half-tone higher, and climbed several steps above the G.

Some further conversation in a lower tone did not reach the dreamy listener in the window.

After a slight delay the opening bars of an accompaniment sounded from the piano, and the singer began again. It was the cantabile from

Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila," "My heart at the sweet voice."

The song rolled on, in its pure legato, full of tender sweetness and technical perfection, till it was interrupted by the man's voice.

"Ilva, *mein Kindchen*, what shall I say to you? Your possibilities and your impossibilities will drive me mad."

"What is it now?" cried the woman, fretfully. "I can never hope to please you!"

"It's just what it always is. The coldness of your singing would freeze any Samson that ever lived."

She began the song again, and sang it with a slight increase of spirit. The man at the piano sighed as she took up the refrain "Ah, come list to my fond wooing!"

The dreamy, descriptive strains of the second verse sounded on the still, warm air. The rippling accompaniment halted spasmodically, and the singer, in turn, interrupted.

"How can I sing when I have to wait and listen for your time? I shall do well enough with the orchestra, but your playing is simply demoralizing."

"I know it is bad, dear, but I wish you would try it again. Wait, though, Ellis is here somewhere; let him play for you. You cannot quarrel with his accompaniments."

There was a peculiarly heavy step, and the amber curtains that enclosed the window were drawn aside.

"Ellis, come and play 'Samson' for this child, will you? You have spoiled her. She scorns her old husband's playing of late."

He cast a fond look back into the

room, and Van Horn smiled deprecatingly as he rose from his lazy position.

The elder man laid his arm affectionately about Ellis's shoulders as they walked down the long room together.

Ilva stood still by the piano till the young man came up to her. She was wearing a long tea-gown of pale yellow silk, and as her slender figure outlined itself against the crimson velvet of the portière behind her, Van Horn was struck with the effect of the barbaric color combination.

"When did you come?" she asked, indifferently.

"Half an hour ago, perhaps. You see, I require a certain amount of Otto's presence, even though I do not have his society. He can inspire me and make me feel things."

"Now Ilva, listen!" Otto Siegfried leaned on the end of the piano as Ellis took his seat. "Let the whole passion of this music possess you. Yield your soul to the words and meaning of——"

"Otto, it is not possible! How can I simulate what I have never known? It's nonsense. I have not the slightest feeling about it."

"Have you no imagination?" demanded Siegfried, pacing up and down with his heavy step. "Be an artist, Ilva, and not a child." The man stopped, facing his wife, and his piercing gray eyes looked full into hers. There was an intensity in the gaze that startled Van Horn, and he shrank involuntarily, marveling at the queer earnestness of these artist people. Then Siegfried laid his broad hand on his shoulder and said:

"Ilva, let us say that Ellis here is *Samson* and you are *Dalila*. You love him, remember, and are determined to arouse in him the hurricane you know is there. It is worth the effort. Put all your woman's power into it. Now!"

He nodded to Van Horn and moved away from the piano. The young man was conscious of a subtle stirring within him, and glanced hastily at Ilva. Her languid, dusky eyes

were full of a startled surprise, and followed her husband in a semi-hypnotic gaze as he crossed the room.

Ellis began the accompaniment, and at the right moment Ilva's voice flowed into it like a flood of golden sunlight over a vaguely troubled sea.

Her fancy woke and poured vivid life and color into the music. The tender wooing, the caressive language and the loving entreaty of the song grew to intense realism.

Van Horn had no remembrance afterward of playing the accompaniment. He was as one in a dream, and he never knew whether Ilva did stretch out white, jeweled hands to him, or whether they were the beguiling hands of the imaginary *Dalila* which beckoned, shadow-like, as the soft, coaxing love-notes fell luringly on his senses:

Ah, come list to my fond wooing;
'Tis with ardor my heart imbuing!

The drowsing melody poured smoothly from the singer's lips, and one felt the delicious languor of an Oriental Summer, inhaled the spicy breath of sandalwood, and saw the purple shadows of the palms, while over all rose the seductive tones of the woman's voice, swelling in passionate pleading, thrilling the heart. The sweetness died away and spent itself in the last tender cry:

My own—Samson—I love thee!

Siegfried returned to the piano. He looked eagerly into the dusky, mysterious eyes of his wife, his own ablaze with artistic enthusiasm.

"It was superb, Ilva. Never talk of impossibilities again. Only sing like that this afternoon and to-morrow night."

The sudden low sobbing of a child prevented any reply, and Siegfried turned hastily toward a couch in a shadowy corner, where lay a child, face downward, shaking with long-suppressed sobs. Siegfried lifted him and pillowed the curly head on his shoulder, hushing and soothing him in low, coaxing tones.

Ilva stood watching her husband and the little Karl, with strange lights flashing in her stormy dark eyes.

Van Horn played softly through the refrain just ended and watched Ilva through half-closed lids. A look of curious speculation and wonder was veiled by his drooping lashes, and when the singer turned her gloomy eyes to him his eyes held a question.

He rose suddenly from the piano, shook himself, and walked quickly to the couch, where Siegfried sat with Karl.

"I must go now, Otto. I have an engagement."

Siegfried went with him to the elevator.

"Come early to rehearsal, will you, Ellis? I think the oboe that takes Edwards's place needs watching. Edwards is going to die, poor boy! I must go to see him after rehearsal."

It was fully three-quarters of an hour after the time set when Ilva Siegfried presented herself at the rehearsal. The orchestra, which had been called two hours earlier, had grown tired and cross and the chorus impatient. Ellis Van Horn pervaded the company like a south wind, soothing, conciliating, pacifying, while Siegfried strode heavily up and down in the corridor.

When Ilva finally appeared she was pale and seemed weary, but made no excuse for her tardiness.

Siegfried took his place at the conductor's desk, and the rehearsal began.

A spirit of unrest was abroad that boded disaster. Nothing went well. The choruses were sung carelessly and without art. The climax was reached when, in the midst of an important passage, the unfortunate new oboe lost his head and played a wildly discordant strain that brought dismay and confusion to the whole orchestra.

Siegfried beat a mad tattoo on the desk, and in his strong, nervous fingers the slender baton broke into three pieces, with an ominous little crash.

Silence followed the mishap. Siegfried said never a word, but a singular pallor overspread his dark face as he thrust into his pocket the splintered fragments of the baton.

"Evil will come of it," whispered the last man on the row of second violins. "Hans Friedrich broke his baton the night before the great——"

"Begin the same chorus again," said Siegfried, briefly.

No further trouble arose. The oboe was on his guard, and all went well.

Ilva rose to sing the cantabile. All the fire and passion of the morning burst forth anew as she threw her whole passionate heart into the music, and Siegfried forgot the vexations of the rehearsal in the magnificent singing of his wife.

Ilva was trembling with excitement when she took her seat. The chorus and orchestra broke into informal applause, and Ellis Van Horn stood before her, smiling and holding out his hand.

The rehearsal over, Siegfried hurried away to the bedside of young Edwards, and Ellis Van Horn went back with Ilva to the apartment.

Siegfried was greatly beloved in the orchestra. Each member felt that he had his own reasons for loving the dark-browed conductor, and though, to an unknowing observer, he appeared somewhat harsh and impatient, every man under him knew of his infinite kindness.

In the lonely last hours of his life young Edwards clung like a child to Siegfried, and begged him to remain until the end. Siegfried stayed, and finally closed the boyish blue eyes with a woman's tenderness and love.

It was after midnight when the boy died, and Siegfried walked home, full of wearily conflicting theories as to the fate of the soul that had but now begun to unravel the mysteries. Some lines of Omar Khayyám recurred to him again and again as he toiled up the many stairs of the hotel:

When you and I behind the veil are
passed,
O, but the long, long while the world
will last!

The elevator had stopped running, and the lights burned but dimly on every second landing. The sound of his own heavy steps prevented his hearing the lighter footsteps coming down, and in his abstraction he scarcely perceived the slender, muffled figure that passed him in the gloomy passage. Siegfried was strangely depressed. The night had grown cold, and he shivered as he unlocked the door of his rooms.

Ilva sat in the circle of lamplight by the piano, her hands folded in her lap. Her sombre eyes glittered sleepily between her dark, curved lashes as her husband kissed her.

"How is your *Musiker*?" she asked, languidly.

"He is dead," answered the man. "You must go to bed this instant, Ilva. Why did you sit up? You must not be tired to-morrow."

She watched him curiously, half-stealthily, for a moment, then with a slight shrug of her shoulders silently left the room.

Siegfried seated himself in the chair she had occupied and took up the book she had evidently just laid down. It was a white-and-gold volume of the *Rubaiyat*. He turned the leaves and smiled to see how often the purple pencil-marks that strayed through all of Ilva's reading had bracketed lines and passages. He came on the words that had haunted him:

When you and I behind the veil are
passed.

On another page heavy lines were
drawn about

Yesterday this day's madness did pre-
pare
To-morrow's silence, triumph or despair.
Drink! For you know not whence you
come, nor why;
Drink! For you know not why you go,
nor where.

He rose restlessly, laid aside the book and closed the piano. As he removed the music he found the book of "*Samson et Dalila*" uppermost.

"*Samson* and Omar Khayyám!" he mused. "*Dalila* and the Persian poet!" There was a singular appropriateness about the connection of the names that he noted then, and remembered long afterward.

He turned out the light and retired. Too weary to sleep, he tossed for hours on his pillow. Near dawn he slept and dreamed. He saw a long gray cloud drifting away beyond the city. Out of the mist smiled Ilva's face, pale and intense; and as he looked he perceived that her whole form was wrapped about with the coiling tresses of a gigantic *Samson*, whose face was hidden in the cloud. One strong, dark hand showed faintly through the mist, and in it gleamed the white-and-gold volume of Omar Khayyám. The cloud drifted slowly from view, and as it faded in the distance Ilva's voice came floating back, singing faintly, like a thread of echoing music, the refrain of the cantabile:

Ah, come list to my fond wooing.

He woke to find the little Karl standing in his nightgown beside the bed, staring gravely at him through tangled masses of yellow hair. He scrambled into bed and nestled close to his father. The two slept till the sunlight streamed into the room.

"*Samson et Dalila*" was the main attraction at the Metropolitan that Sunday night. Ilva's voice was new to weary New York, and, it was reported, was sufficiently remarkable to pay one for going to hear it; so an unusual audience had assembled.

The sacred opera had proceeded successfully almost to the end. Ellis Van Horn, as *Samson*, had rendered his impassioned appeal, defying the divine power and the elements that threatened, and now the beautiful, lithe *Dalila* came forward again with the opening measures of the famous cantabile. Critics had cautiously advanced the opinion that the lyric quality of Ilva's voice was not suited to the part of *Dalila*, but nothing

could surpass the magic beauty of those first calm, clinging measures. At the exquisite refrain all listened breathless to the wooing, seductive pleading of the wonderful love-song. When it came again, at the end of the song, they wondered more and more at the power and passion that pulsed so madly through the sweet, sensuous strains.

The piece swept on to the end, but even through the excitement of the last scenes, with their thunder and destruction, all felt that the climax had been reached in the love-song.

When the curtain was down at last, and Siegfried was at liberty, he hastened to seek his wife. He found her talking in low, excited tones with Ellis Van Horn. When she saw her husband she came swiftly to him. She clasped his hand with her small, cold fingers, looking at him with her wonderful eyes on fire, but with a face singularly grave.

"It was yourself, Otto. You taught me to sing. You showed me how to sing, and all that comes of it we shall owe to you—all to you! Do you understand?"

"And much will come of it, *Kindchen*. Such a success as you have had to-night must lead to much," he answered, eagerly.

"Yes, to much—much! And all since yesterday! The day before I could not have done it. 'Yesterday this day's madness did prepare.'" Ilva laughed out recklessly as she spoke, and Siegfried looked at her with some anxiety.

"You are excited and worn out, Ilva. You should go home at once. I must ask Ellis to take you, for I have a lot of things to do before I leave here."

Van Horn bowed and murmured his assent, and Siegfried hurried away.

It was late when he ascended the long stairways of the hotel, and he was very tired. Finding the rooms dark and silent, he went directly to bed and slept dreamlessly till he was awakened in the early morning by Karl, who dragged feebly at his father's arm with his little cold hands.

"Come!" he entreated. "Come with Karl!"

Siegfried tried to draw him into the bed, but he struggled away, repeating insistently:

"Come—come with Karl!"

The tears began to gather in the grave, dark eyes, and Siegfried rose in some alarm. Getting hastily into his clothes, he took the child by the hand and was led straight to Ilva's room.

The bed was empty, undisturbed, and Ilva was not there.

On the pillow was a note. It was like her to leave no possibility of doubt.

You told me he was *Samson*. You said I loved him, and must make him love me. I have done this, and we are going away.

ILVA.

The delicate brutality of the few words stunned the man. He sat stupidly on the edge of the white bed and neither spoke nor stirred.

Karl walked solemnly up and down, dragging a toy wagon to which was attached a bell that jingled monotonously. The man's eyes followed the child unconsciously, till the little fellow left the toy and climbed, shivering, to his father's side. After many vain attempts to attract his attention, the boy sat silently watching him with great, mournful eyes.

Something of the man's vast despair must have penetrated the childish mind, and when he could bear the strange silence no longer, he broke into loud, frightened sobbing. Siegfried gathered him into his arms, murmuring meaningless words of comfort and reassurance. He sought vaguely in his pockets for some treasure that might divert the child. Thrusting his hand deep into his coat, some sharp, jagged objects pierced his fingers. Startled by the physical pain, he turned the pocket inside out, and a moan of recollection escaped him as there fell on the white bed-cover the shattered fragments of the broken baton.

DAILY BREAD

WHEN athirst this soul of mine
 And my hungry heart unfed,
 Oh, her smile is like to wine
 And her words are like to bread.

Ah, sweetheart, give alms to-day!
 Grant a famished life its due!
 Give me daily bread, I pray,
 Of the words and smile of you!

T. G.



THE DIFFICULTY OVERCOME

BROOKS—I wish you'd pay me that \$10 you owe me, old fellow.
 BORROWIT—I couldn't think of it, Brooks.
 "But I'm here to remind you of it."



THE KEY OF THE SITUATION

FIRST DETECTIVE—How did you manage to discover the scandal in
 their family closet?
 SECOND DETECTIVE—Well, you see, I had a skeleton key.



ALL THAT'S LEFT THEM

WHILE autos, bikes and equestrians
 On park roads take their flights,
 The only rights of pedestrians
 Seem to be funeral rites.

DOROTHY DORR,

THE CURRENT OF THINGS

By Edgar Fawcett

A T Oxford, where he was not unpopular and was always a good deal observed in his goings and comings, they used to say of him that he veiled behind languor an immense egotism. This annoyed his constant friend, Thaxton, who insisted that no libel could be more factitious.

But not a few of the other Balliol men treated Thorpe Thaxton's defensive stand as the merest snobbish pose. Of course, he had his motives. Money was a huge power nowadays, and this Thaxton fellow could hold his own well enough, past a doubt, as eldest son of a hugely rich Birmingham cutler. Nevertheless, blood and title were always dear to these new Croesuses. Old England wasn't quite hopelessly vulgarized yet. The upstarts knew a gentleman—or a lady. And Adalbert Hereward had a sister, pretty and rather poor.

"It's all such rubbish!" Thorpe said, while he sat one afternoon in a corner of the ancient Mitre Inn, eating Scotch scones and drinking deep draughts of tea with a Balliol man of his own year. "You tell me, Brownynge, that they think this about us, think that about us, and think the other thing. Rot, dear boy! I've no more 'ambitions'—absurd word!—with respect to Adalbert than if he were a Turkish Grand Vizier. He knows it, I know it, and we both disdain the idea. It's merely a friendship on both sides." Here Thorpe, in a mood of peculiar confidence, threw back his head and laughed. "He's an incessant amusement to me; he's wondrously attractive. I mean the way in which he lets himself drift."

"Lets himself drift?" said Brown-

ynge, who at once thought of a boat on the near Isis, and didn't at all understand. He was rather ugly of visage and build himself. He envied Thaxton his tall, straight frame, short crop of brown curls, and face that seemed, even on the dreariest day, somehow to have the sun in it.

"He's a fatalist. I suppose one would call him that. He never tries, he never objects, he takes everything for granted."

"But he tried in the boat race last year."

"Not much. Not at all, in fact. By nature he's enormously muscular. His crew won; he never cared; he forgot all about it the next day."

"But if he takes any prize, this graduating term, in Greek?"

"He adores Greek; he's drenched with it. He won't recollect, however, five or six days after his possible triumph, whether he's been crowned with laurels or—ashes. And that's what all you men call—" pursued Thorpe, with a big gulp of the scalding tea that he loved on a damp Oxford day—"affectation! It's nothing of the sort; it's simply Adalbert. Now look here, Brownynge," and Thorpe suddenly buttonholed his companion, "I don't ask you to tell me what they're *saying* about my friend's behavior at the Armitages', but you must know as well as I do that Miss Cecilia is no match for him."

Miss Cecilia Armitage was certainly six years older than Adalbert Hereward. The Armitage family were poor folk, of good descent, who had lived in Oxford for many generations. Proctors, deans and dons were like leaves, rather than branches, of

the genealogical tree, and it was said that they had not had for fifty years a single daughter of their house unable to construe the first six books of the Iliad at sight.

"Miss Cecilia," it had got about, "may be able thus to construe the first six books, but she certainly has no such compromised appearance." Beyond doubt she was engaging; and when, quite near his hour of graduation, Adalbert had distinctly failed to propose to her, everybody blamed Thorpe Thaxton.

But the latter, one day, almost shouted to Adalbert his distress. "They're putting it all on *me*," rang his complaint. "If you love the girl, why on earth don't you tell her so?"

Adalbert nodded rather vaguely, pulling at the end of his pointed blond beard, and surveying Thorpe with his big eyes of drowsy blue. "My dear Thorpe," he said, "do you really think it's in the current of things?"

"Not a bit. I know you well enough to tell you so, and by all means I should advise your breaking off at once with Cecilia Armitage. You're not cut out for one another at all. She hasn't a penny, and you, as you've told me——"

"Have only twelve hundred pounds a year," finished Adalbert, behind a yawn. He put his hand, the next moment, on Thorpe's arm. "Dear old chap! I won't propose. But how about fate?"

Thorpe suppressed a laugh. "Damn your 'fate!' Hasn't a fellow free will?"

"Oh, *has* he?" And then Thorpe remembered how immensely Adalbert had read the German and French philosophers—Kant, Hegel, Comte, Descartes, and many another.

"Oh, if you're going to talk like that!" he exclaimed. "Well, all I've got to answer is, slip away from Oxford and leave the affair in my hands."

Slipping away from Oxford meant for Adalbert a rather glorious retreat. Collegiate honors of no mean import were connected with his departure. There were those who affirmed that

except for his "laziness" he might have reaped even higher honors. But poor Thaxton had to face the brunt of a wrathful and aggrieved household, which he did with all the tact he could muster—by no means a meagre amount.

"Why on earth," said Thorpe afterward to his friend, when they were in London together, "did you make Cecilia Armitage believe you cared for her?"

"But I didn't. At least, I didn't *mean* to, dear Thorpe. The whole thing, you see, has simply *happened*. I do so regret having bored you! You were what they call in philosophy, my friend, an incident force. That is, you happened, too. Everything happens. You've heard me speak before now about the current of things."

"Oh, haven't I!" grimaced Thorpe.

"Well, it's so interesting to stand on the bank, as one might say, and watch. We all do stand on the bank and watch. That is, metaphorically."

"Quite so," muttered Thorpe; "and practically we're all in the swim."

"Oh, yes. We're all part of the inevitable, of course. We can't help being in the swim." Here Adalbert looked full at his companion, with that placid sweetness which fascinated both sexes in almost equal degree. "For example, I am smoking this cigarette. Untold millions of years ago it became a necessity that I should smoke this cigarette, and knock off its ash, just as I am doing now, with the nail of my little finger."

Thorpe gave a tired sigh. He had heard a good deal of talk in precisely the same vein from the same source, and though it had once amused him, it had now lost much of its old savor.

On a table at his elbow was a note from one of Adalbert's aunts. He took it up, waved the open pages a moment, and then let it fall.

"Here," he said, "is the pleasant invitation from Mrs. Cavendish Dudley for you to spend with her a week or two at her charming Broadstairs

home. If there is any adorable place within a hundred miles of London it is Broadstairs. You can go or not go, just as you please."

"It *seems* that I can," gently corrected Adalbert. "But remember, my dear Thorpe, that what one does one does. One can never do two things at the same time. Hence, if I go to Broadstairs I cannot possibly prove that causes and effects dating back through measureless reaches of time have not compelled me to become Aunt Cynthia's guest."

Adalbert went to stay with his aunt, and Thorpe soon received an invitation to join him at the delightful sea-fronting villa.

"My dear Mr. Thaxton," said Mrs. Dudley, soon after Thorpe's arrival, "I do so want to ask you what are your feelings with respect to my poor dead sister's son. Adalbert strikes me as a most talented and brilliant man."

"He undoubtedly is," answered Thorpe.

"Yet *so* indolent."

"Indolent hardly describes him, Mrs. Dudley. Adalbert, to be quite frank with you, is a man victimized by the idea of fatalism. He is possessed of the belief that it is needless to *do* anything. He has convinced himself that, since all events are certain to occur in regular sequence, we should merely yield ourselves, passively acquiescent, to their power. Hence he has a sworn dislike of struggle, and a firm faith in letting himself drift, as he calls it, with the current."

Mrs. Dudley gave a great sigh. "Oh, I've more than guessed it. I've even realized it," she pensively murmured. "And I have such ambitions for him, Mr. Thorpe! Everything I possess will go to him some day. He has taken the place of that son I lost in earlier years. I am now a childless widow, as you know. My love for this strange yet fascinating nephew of mine has become the one sole passion of my life." She fingered, fleetingly, a lapel of Thorpe's coat. "You're asking yourself, of

course, what an old woman like me has to do with a passion."

"Ah, dear lady," replied Thorpe, admiring her slenderness and grace, as though they were qualities of some flower touched by earliest frosts of Autumn, "I am asking myself, on the contrary, why so beautiful a passion should be thrown away on our eccentric and incorrigible Adalbert."

"Pray don't tell me that I throw it away," Mrs. Dudley protested. They stood together beside a big, broad-paned window of her charming house. Below them the Channel glittered, like an immense mirror that some imp of the air had dashed suddenly into millions of shining shards. A Midsummer evening cloud of the most ethereal lilac hung over the huge, bulging cliffs that rear their chalky dignities between Broadstairs and Ramsgate. "You might as well say to Nature that she squanders recklessly the beauty of a divine afternoon like this! I can't credit it; I won't. Nothing is lost, in *my* philosophy. Everything has its meaning and its future permanence *somewhere!* All, of course, however, is mystery. My love for Adalbert is a mystery to myself. And yet I feel its essence thrill me like some pungent fragrance. Of course, his fatalism is true enough. Who can sensibly refute it? We are, all of us, puppets. Do you remember Tennyson's bitter lines in 'Maud?'—bitter, but true:

"We are puppets, Man in his pride and
Beauty fair in her flower;
Do we move ourselves or are moved by
an unseen hand at a game?"

"Well, the great point is to *forget* all this. And I want my Adalbert to forget it!" She paused, and her gray-green eyes, flashing over Thorpe's face, made him remember that she had been called, in other days, the most winsome girl of her time while at Windsor as lady of honor to the Queen. "And I am bent on trying to make Adalbert forget it! You are his best friend, and you can aid me."

Thorpe gave an astonished start. "Aid you, Mrs. Dudley? How?"

"In this way: I want Adalbert to wake himself up. I want him to go into the House of Commons. Oh, don't look so very amazed! I can manage. One of my intimate friends, Lord Maltravers, would aid me handsomely, beyond a doubt. But that would come afterward."

"You mean," laughed Thorpe, "after you succeeded in the waking up."

"Yes; we must effect that first."

"We?"

"Ah, you are incredulous. But let me go on. You really *do* like my nephew?"

"I'm his devoted friend."

"To-morrow my niece, Lady Isabel Orrow, is coming here. Adalbert and Isabel have often met before. They are not in the least related. Lady Isabel is the daughter of my husband's step-sister, who married the Earl of Grantham. Isabel, between you and me, dotes on Adalbert."

"Really?"

"You've heard him speak of her, no doubt?"

"Yes—but——"

"I understand. Not with the vaguest hint that they had ever flirted. But they have—desperately. Isabel is just one-and-twenty, and very pretty. No, that doesn't describe her; but you shall see her to-morrow and judge for yourself. She is *just* the match I desire for Adalbert. She has twelve thousand pounds a year and a fine home in Surrey, besides. All her people are dead, and I do what I can for her as chaperon in the London season—that is, when she chooses to leave her country home, of which she is very fond."

"And how about Adalbert?" asked Thorpe. "Is she very fond of him as well?"

"Ah, who can read a girl's heart? But I am certain he interests her. I am certain, too, that the prospect of this visit fills her with furtive pleasure. But then, there is another point." Mrs. Dudley's eyes drooped, and into her under-lip there came a sad little quiver. "She's enormously angry at him."

"Angry? why?"

"Oh, for his neglect. Besides, it has reached her that he has been having an affair with some girl at Oxford. But she would be angrier still if she had heard him yesterday, when I mentioned to him that she was coming."

"What did he say?" smiled Thorpe; "one of his fatalistic things?"

"Precisely. It was this: 'Isabel Orrow coming to stay here, eh? How nice! Do you know, aunt, that I have a feeling I shall marry Isabel one of these days? I'm really fond of her, and unless the bends of life should lead us apart, I am more than half convinced that we shall drop, before long, into matrimonial concord. However, my dear aunt, I confess that I don't like her title, though it's merely one of courtesy. I don't like the "Mr. and Lady Isabel Hereward" which it would involve. However, that would prove a decree, like everything else, of the unavoidable. Or, rather, it would prove so if our marriage came to pass.'"

"Exquisite!" laughed Thorpe.

"How *can* you!" Mrs. Dudley protested.

"Oh, I mean that it so exquisitely represents *him*." And through Thorpe's mind were rushing memories of similar declarations made with respect to Miss Armitage.

He could not help recounting this entire Oxford episode, and when he had done so he found his interlocutress in literal shudders. "But I don't think he really cared a farthing for the girl," supplemented Thorpe. "You see, these Armitages all laid siege to him. And Adalbert, to use his own words, merely let himself drift."

Mrs. Dudley was pale and agitated when he had finished. "My foolish, insensate boy!" she exclaimed. The dying daylight revealed covert tears on her lashes. "That is the way he will go on! Some day a woman—well, heaven knows how odious a woman!—will trick him and trap him past all aid of mine."

"Not if *I* am there," said Thorpe, with loyalty in every accent.

Mrs. Dudley caught one of his hands. The next instant she stooped and excitedly kissed it.

"You dear fellow! I don't wonder Adalbert is so fond of you. Forgive his adoring old aunt. He must be saved. I can see that you'll help me. You say that you'll 'be there.' But you can't be there always. You're here now, however—and *she* comes to-morrow. You remember what I said about waking him up? It's you, it's you, with your handsome face, your winning manners, and—pardon me, but I must be brutal for a minute—your prospective big Birmingham fortune—who can wake him up, and send all this fatuity of 'fatalism' to the four winds."

"Really," murmured Thorpe, while the enkindled eyes of his hostess brought a warm flush to his face, "I do not, Mrs. Dudley, understand you in the least."

"I know, I know," swept on the other. "But you shall, presently. Now, listen. As you love Adalbert—and I am confident you do love him—only listen."

She spoke for some time, ardently, with extreme entreaty and appeal. The longer Thorpe listened the more serious grew his countenance.

"But you *can't* mean," he at length blurted out, "that Lady Isabel Orrow would consent to let me flirt with her—or seem as if I were doing so—in order that Adalbert may receive what you call the rousing dirk-thrust of jealousy?"

Mrs. Dudley threw up both hands. Then she answered him, with mounting color and almost a touch of temper: "Have I dreamed of insinuating anything so absurd? Of course not! Above all things, Isabel must not even remotely suspect. My plan is to have you pour attentions upon her. This may bore you, but I hardly think it will. Wait till you've seen her."

"Don't you forget that it may bore *her*?" inquired Thorpe, with a kind of merry modesty.

"You're delightful," approved his hearer. "But then, you can afford to undervalue your attentions." Here she squared herself, and looked chal-

lenging inquiry at him. "Now, for the sake of our Adalbert's future, will you join me in my momentous plan?"

"Yes," assented the other, after a little silence. Then, breaking into laughter, he added: "But how will it be 'joining you,' dear Mrs. Dudley? Surely I shall stand quite alone in the affair—playing the heroic hypocrite, and running the chance of having myself haughtily snubbed."

Mrs. Dudley scanned with new attention his fresh, comely face. She even let her eyes slip along the lines of his trim and virile figure. "Oh, there's no such danger. Besides, you can withdraw if it threatens. Because a woman is in love with one man, it doesn't mean that she will treat another with scorn—especially if he's nice. And you—well, you'll do admirably. There—is it a compact? If so, shake hands on it."

They shook hands on it, and the next day Lady Isabel arrived.

She was driven from the station by Adalbert in one of his aunt's smart traps. It was then rather late in the afternoon, and Thaxton did not meet her until just before dinner. When he came into the drawing-room he heard an entrancing voice saying, as if equally to his friend and hostess:

"It is so pleasant to be near the sea once more! My Dormdreeme has one sad drawback—it's untranslatable. I sometimes do so wish that I could touch an electric button and change it, with all its green acres, from inland Surrey to seabound Kent."

"Electricity will do everything in time," said Adalbert. "Ah, Thorpe, here you are, old chap." Then he looked at his aunt, who promptly said:

"Mr. Thaxton Thorpe, Lady Isabel Orrow;" and very soon they were all four seated at dinner.

"You must like Mr. Thaxton ever so much, Isabel," said Adalbert, sipping his sherry. "Everybody does. He hasn't an enemy in the world, and he's legions of friends."

"Come, come, Adalbert," chided his aunt. "Good wine, you know."

"Really," said Thorpe to Lady Isabel, "my alleged vast popularity is

like one of those poor, disreputable quack medicines which has only a single supporter."

"He means me," said Adalbert, with a demure levity quite his own. "There's something spectacular, however, in Thorpe's mendacity."

"Ho, ho!" said Thorpe; "there's a nice, gargoyleish kind of insult!"

"I'll apologize, and call it self-effacement. He tells us he's a quack medicine. Well, I've tried him, and found him highly beneficial."

Thorpe had been quietly studying Lady Isabel, and had acquired an enduring picture for the gallery of his future memories. It had eyes, this picture, whose vivacious darkness contrasted strikingly with the waves of blond hair. But the master artist that painted it had lavished his craft on the flexile mouth, so small, yet with a wealth of witcheries of mutable expression. It never occurred to Thorpe that Lady Isabel was beautiful. He had merely begun to feel that she was, perhaps, full of moods, fancies, dreams, that it would be charming to discover, like soft silks or antique jewels hidden away in some locked and lacquered cabinet. The keys to this cabinet—how reluctantly might she surrender them, one by one! "That doubt, engendered mysteriously by her outward personality," thought Thorpe—"with what tricky sort of lure it invested her!"

The weather stayed brilliant and tranquil. Lady Isabel smiled with delight next morning when Adalbert announced, during breakfast, that Thorpe's steam yacht was in the little harbor near by, at Ramsgate, and would lend its sumptuous accommodations to anyone desirous of enjoying them.

Lady Isabel adored yachting in good weather. She had enjoyed quite a long talk with Thorpe the evening before, while Adalbert drowsed, or seemed to drowse, over the *Fortnightly* in a distant corner, and had concluded that previous quick-whispered words from Mrs. Dudley were true. He *was* every inch a gentleman. Moreover, he was personable in a way that

impressed a girl more and more as he talked. Adalbert must be correct about his popularity. Then, too, hadn't her young cousin, Yorke Orme, said to her at Dormdreeme, only last week (he himself being an Oxonian undergraduate), that there was no better fellow in the whole town than Thorpe Thaxton, and that his detractors were spurred by the merest spite?

"It isn't my yacht at all, Lady Isabel," said Thorpe, with smiling candor. "It belongs to my uncle, who has lent it to me for the Summer, as he is seeking health in the Austrian Tyrol just now. I couldn't possibly afford to keep up the *Fornarina*, and our mischievous Adalbert well knows it. However, I am her temporary owner, and should be pleased if you would all three take a sail with me this afternoon. My man will have the order despatched to Ramsgate in no time."

The *Fornarina* was in readiness not long afterward, and the perfect weather promised an ideal cruise. Thorpe's uncle was a man who loved his steam yacht as some men love their favorite horse. Wealth had given him the power of caressing her into a condition of faultless mechanism, allied to a luxury of service that discipline could ill surpass.

"Was the Channel ever so lovely?" said Mrs. Dudley, seating herself on the clean, even deck at her nephew's side. "This, Adalbert, is one of the fascinating things that riches can do. We come of a race, you and I, that used to call riches vulgar. But we must reverse our old verdicts. These new millionaires are so often refined. They buy refinement, like everything else. Look at Thorpe Thaxton now as he paces the deck arm-in-arm with Isabel; who would dream that he comes of a class which *we* once treated as oafs and clods?"

"True," said Adalbert, throwing aside his magazine. "But then *that* part of the inevitable has for decades been so clear."

"Oh, the inevitable!" sighed his aunt. "You're always thinking of it!"

"Really, dear Aunt Cynthia, is there anything else to think of?"

"Lots, Adalbert, lots!"

"How so? The inevitable is life."

"Oh, is it?" Here Mrs. Dudley looked at the rosy little pointed nails of one hand as if she had the intention of tearing off a couple of them. But her nephew's gaze roamed away to a huge, receding chalk cliff, washed along its base by sunny liquid amethyst, while his kinswoman proceeded:

"Take *those two*, now. They're both young, both handsome. Suppose they fell in love with each other. It wouldn't be at all a bad match in the eyes of the world, as the world goes at present. Lady Isabel Thaxton hasn't at all a plebeian sound. His grandfather, they say, was a retail ironmonger, but Lady Agnes Throop's brewer husband has a grandfather, they also say, who kept a public-house in Leeds."

"God bless my soul!" Uttering this rather dramatic apostrophe with much quietude, Adalbert slowly reared himself in his chair.

"Ah," thought Mrs. Dudley, in unconscious quotation, "a hit—a palpable hit. You told me once," she hurried on, aloud, and with much veiled vehemence, "that you had a feeling Isabel and yourself would ultimately marry."

"So I did—so I did."

"But you never thought that some sudden change would take her from you. You imagined that she was safely awaiting you there at Dormdreeme, like a sleeping beauty, for you to go and wake at any moment."

"Perhaps—perhaps." Adalbert had risen from his chair. As he advanced toward Lady Isabel and her companion, Mrs. Dudley called after him:

"The inevitable, remember, is something that we poor mortals can rebel against, even while we tell ourselves that we can't. The whole thing is a mighty mystery, Addie, my boy; but effort, and not apathy, is the best help for it."

There were other enchanting sails on the *Fornarina* as days glided along. Lady Isabel chose always to go; sometimes Mrs. Dudley did not feel equal

to going, but insisted that Adalbert should take her place, and sometimes Adalbert refused to go because of real or assumed laziness, and she went—always very reluctantly on these occasions.

About a week later there appeared at the Broadstairs villa an exceedingly smart vehicle, to which were attached a pair of sleek roans of good breed and style. But the carriage had room for only two, and although Adalbert drove out in it with Thorpe the first day after its arrival (the whole pretty and proper thing being another avuncular loan), Lady Isabel, on the following day and several days that succeeded it, graciously assumed his place. People meanwhile came in for tea on certain afternoons; golf was played on neighboring links; dances were held at this or that near residence; the light yet accentuated movement of the English Summer seaside kept up its brisk, unassuming, conventional course. Gossip, that bee that hums everywhere, even while it does not sting, had begun its murmuring about Mrs. Dudley's ears.

One day she seized her chance for a private chat with Adalbert. She joined him as he strolled through the breezy, park-like space that formed, with its winding paths, its manifold scattered benches, its delicious, lawny lapses islanded by flower-beds, and its magnificent marine frontage, the fairest feature of Broadstairs.

Mrs. Dudley went straight to the point. "Adalbert, I really think that Isabel feels you are neglecting her."

"Did she tell you so?" he inquired, brusquely, with one of his rare frowns.

"Tell me? Mercy, no! That wouldn't be at all like Isabel. Come, now, *would* it?"

"No, I fancy not. But she doesn't realize any neglect. She's quite satisfied with affairs as they are. She's thoroughly absorbed in Thorpe."

Mrs. Dudley suppressed a wrathful sigh. "Will you ever, in your life," she exclaimed, "really love any woman?"

"I?" His eyes, full of an unaccus-

tomed gloom, were fixed on the lady's face as he answered: "I'm in love with Isabel. I had always imagined—but you remember what I told you, not so long ago."

"Yes—I remember—of course," managed Mrs. Dudley, in agitation. "And you *are* in love with Isabel?"

"Never so much as now. I adore her."

"You say it very coldly."

"How shall I say it? With wavings of both arms and with gnashings of teeth? That isn't my way."

"I don't ask you to be ludicrous—of course not. But you leave her constantly with *him*! You don't make an effort."

"An effort? how?" He looked again at his aunt, and shook his head as if in soft negation. "Dear Aunt Cynthia, you quite disregard the current of things. Millions and millions of years ago——"

"Hush, Adalbert!" And Mrs. Dudley caught his wrist. "Your 'current of things' and your 'millions and millions of years ago' appeal to me now with a terrible familiarity. Perhaps they appeal guiltily, self-accusingly, as well. I've a confession to make you. Listen." And then she plunged into the most unrestrained avowal of her plot with Thorpe Thaxton.

Adalbert's face had brightened somewhat when she finished. "It's a masquerade, then, between those two?"

"It's a masquerade on Thaxton's part—that I dare swear!" They were near the noise of the waves now, and Mrs. Dudley could confidently louden her voice, besides intensifying her language.

"But Isabel? what of her?"

"Would any woman resist such an opportunity of making a man jealous?"

More than half as if speaking to himself, Adalbert now murmured: "Of course, it might be in the current of things that Isabel became a victim to your curious plot."

"All, all," here lamented Mrs. Dudley, "has turned out so differently from what I expected and hoped!

I—I thought to rouse you; I have merely set you drifting more on that abominable 'current of things!' I foresaw stimulation; I have obtained only fresh lethargy. But now the whole secret is unbosomed. Surely *now* you'll be jealous!"

"Jealousy," said Adalbert, in chill, descriptive monotone, "is the brittlest of all stuccoes employed by sentimentalism."

"Still, Mr. Thaxton isn't in love with Isabel," forlornly urged his aunt. "He's—he's merely the acquiescing puppet of my little plot. He's——"

But her voice ended in a scream, as she pointed to a smallish sailboat that was being buffeted by one of those squalls that lurk, tigerish, along the treacherous Channel coast.

"Oh, look! they will be lost!" she cried.

"They? Who?"

"Isabel—Thaxton! I'd forbidden her. She wanted to go with him in that shell. I recognize it—I saw it yesterday while you were gone to town. Yes—yes—I can see Isabel, too—and he's doing his best with the sail—but he can't right her—she'll be over in a minute more—she's driving inland! You see, you see, Adalbert—and yet——"

But there was no Adalbert. She spoke to the air. Presently a great crowd gathered about her. There was talk of "the boats" on every side, and she remembered the splendid rescuing forces all along the coast. Meanwhile, the fragile craft was driven, toppling, curtseying, standing now on its bow, now on its stern, nearer and nearer to rocks that would splinter it into matchwood if it so much as grazed them.

Somebody who had a glass cried: "Look! there's a man swimming straight toward the boat!"

Then someone else: "It's Mr. Hereward, Mrs. Dudley's nephew. I saw him run down and jump into the water."

Next instant the small vessel reeled terribly. The mast broke, and she went over, as a great wave submerged her. For a brief space she was in-

visible. Then her bottom appeared, like the belly of a big dead fish, and two heads were seen close to its glassy bulge. A hollowing of the water disclosed, for less time than it takes to draw one good breath, two human forms, buoyed there somehow—woman and man.

"It's Mr. Hereward!"

"What a jolly fine thing to do!"

"Where's the other—Mr. Thaxton?"

"I saw the boom strike him. Perhaps it stunned him, and he's drowned."

"See! Hereward's got hold of some rope. He's keeping Lady Isabel up with his other hand."

"Where are the boats—the boats?"

"He can't hold her like that very long."

"The boats—the boats! They're being driven in on the rocks. . . . Ah!"

The English can kill with much lurid success, it has been judged, both on land and at sea; but this fact, if true, does not prevent them from saving life all along the cliffs and coves of their wonderful island with a speed, skill and quiet splendor of mercy for which no praise would prove too ample.

From higher vantages than those on which this clamorous group had gathered other eyes had witnessed the abrupt drama of peril and pain. Other minds had worked with alert intelligence. A big, seaworthy barge had been almost magically manned by eight sturdy rowers, and ploughed its path, with amazing fleetness, through swinging surges toward the place of the disaster. Adalbert afterward confessed that if help had come a few seconds later he must have loosened his hold on that fortuitous rope, flung across the overturned sailboat by some strange agency of its reversal, and have dropped, exhausted, with his cherished charge.

The body of Thorpe Thaxton was found several hours later with a heavy bruise on the brow. This injury had doubtless caused the immediate death of a notably good swimmer.

Horror laid a dismal spell that night on Broadstairs, where Mrs. Dudley had long been much beloved, and where her guest, so cruelly lost, had won many friends. No one had disliked Adalbert, though few had found him very approachable. But now the whole place rang with his heroism. In a milder form, his aunt, through weary and torturing hours, had potent proof of it. The strain and shock had more than prostrated Lady Isabel. What had first been thought hysteria turned into actual delirium.

Two doctors were with her till past midnight, and then a third was wired for from London. Meanwhile, other telegrams had to be sent to Birmingham, and horrified answers from relatives there to be received. And all this time *he* rose, a thrilling and sheeted shape, from the floor of that chamber which he had so lately quitted in heartiest plenitude of health. But for Adalbert, sympathetic, aidful, self-collected, Mrs. Dudley told herself that she believed she would go mad—as Lady Isabel seemed then to have really done.

For the latter a long and fierce illness followed. Her kinswoman remained with her through it all. Adalbert went to Birmingham, where the funeral was held, and where he had to face the anguish of two broken-hearted parents and a little bevy of bereaved brothers and sisters as well. Returning to Broadstairs, he found Lady Isabel yet so ill that seeing her was quite out of the question. It was weeks later when they met—in early October, at his aunt's house in Knightsbridge.

It had rained steadily for eight or nine days, in that mournful, lachrymose fashion peculiar to Autumnal London. But to-day was brilliant with sunshine and full of dry yet tepid winds. While Adalbert waited in one of the upper rooms he unclosed a window and let the soft-pulsing airs fan his forehead. Who does not know, if he knows London at all well, those unique Knightsbridge houses whose rear windows, with their tiers of trellised balconies, look down on the um-

brageous majesties of Hyde Park? To-day the moist earth of Rotten Row and the Lady's Mile scintillated below the newly arrived sunlight, and those sombre browns and ochres of the splendid English elms and oaks gained keener tints from their long baths of rain and mist.

Adalbert had met his aunt on the previous evening. As she now glided into the room and took his hand he saw that her face was shadowed oddly. He gave her a startled look.

While they stood together in the bay window, which made a deep alcove with its curves of cushioned seats, veritable embankments of amber velvet, Mrs. Dudley still held his hand.

"She can't come yet. She's hardly seen a soul, you know, since her illness. I didn't want to keep you waiting an age. She was dressing when it came over her."

"What came over her?"

"Oh, a sort of nervous fit. She *will* wear black, you know, for *him*—"

"Yes, you told me."

"—and perhaps the sight of a new black frock did it. Anyway, she grew tearful and trembly."

"Poor girl! So I can't see her to-day? Very well—we'll put it off."

"No—she doesn't want that. Only she would rather have a little more time."

"She shall have all the time she wants," he said. "I'll lounge here in this bay window with a book. I'll stay till dark—till midnight, if she desires."

"Oh, you'll not have to wait more than a half-hour—be sure of that," Mrs. Dudley assured him, with a sigh and a laugh queerly mingled.

She returned to Lady Isabel.

"You've been seeing him, Aunt Cynthia," said the girl, dry-eyed now, and fairly composed. "Did you prepare him? Did you tell him what a wreck I shall look in this black gown?"

"I couldn't have said *that*, Isabel. You show your illness, of course. But anyone can see your youth and

bloom already struggling through the change."

"You said something so strange to me," Lady Isabel announced, after a little silence, during which she gazed down on her thinned fingers, with their loose rings. "You said it early this morning. You wondered *how* I became engaged to Thorpe Thaxton."

"Did I, dear? Well, if it hurt you—"

"Now, don't talk that way, please," quavered Lady Isabel, with a real touch of the invalid's irritability. "You know, quite as well as I do, that there was a plot between yourself and my poor Thorpe!"

"A plot!" uttered Mrs. Dudley, aghast.

"Of course," pursued the girl, with plaintive positiveness. "A plot to make Adalbert—Adalbert the fatalist, as we grew to call him—jealous."

"He told you!" Here Mrs. Dudley recoiled a little. For an instant actual resentment against the dead pierced her.

"Told me!" At this Lady Isabel laughed in a melancholy way. "Poor dear! I had it out of him in no time! As if I didn't see through it all like a web of gossamer! As if—"

And then there came an ominous quivering of the throat, and fresh moisture gathered in the dulled yet still beautiful eyes. Mrs. Dudley caught both her hands and kissed them. She put an arm about the attenuated form and pressed it close to her bosom.

"Now, Belle, Belle, don't give way again! Of course you saw through it. What girl wouldn't have seen? It was only my folly that made me fancy he had deliberately told you, poor dear boy! There, now; you *will* master yourself and go down stairs. I see—you've conquered; you're going to be brave; you're going to fight it out and meet Adalbert."

"And say my say to him, God bless him! Yes! yes!"

"Oh, you need only say just that!" broke from Mrs. Dudley, as they left the room together. "God bless you!" will be all he wishes. Indeed,

he wishes nothing, except to see you once again!"

But when Hereward and she were face to face Lady Isabel said much more. She thanked him copiously, eagerly, passionately. "It was wonderful; it was lovely!" she cried. "He *must* be somewhere, blessing you for your sublime courage! He must be with us both now! He seems to put words in my mouth—words of infinite thanks, Adalbert—which I cannot interpret; which I can only stammer feebly! I——"

And then she broke down, sinking into a chair, mastered by grief. Mrs. Dudley, with quick, imploring gestures, waved Adalbert away. He went back into the enclosure of the bay window, and there his aunt joined him sooner than he expected.

"She is calmer now," said Mrs. Dudley. "She will see you soon again."

They stood for a while in the sunny, triangular space, with their eyes and not their lips holding converse. At length Mrs. Dudley said:

"You heard how she thanked you?"

"Yes."

"And your doing such a grand act, there at Broadstairs—oh, Adalbert, you don't call *that* mere fatalistic necessity?"

"Why not?" he answered. "What else was it? I simply drifted with the current of things."

"A turbulent current, my boy! What about your glorious bravery?"

Adalbert gave a light shrug, though his eyes were very thoughtful. "Mil-

lions and millions of years ago, dear aunt—" he began.

"It was ordained that you should frightfully risk your life for her? But suppose you had remained on shore and done nothing? How about your human will to do something superb, altruistic, for the woman whom you loved and the man whom you believed she loved? Was all your grandeur of self-surrender only in the 'current of things?'"

"If you call it that, why, yes. All—all."

Mrs. Dudley slapped him softly on one cheek. Then she kissed the place that she had slapped.

"But if Isabel—?" she began.

He lifted a forbidding hand.

"Don't speak of that."

"She's yet so young, Adalbert! And you saved her life! And you love her! And grief like this, at her age, very rarely lasts! Don't lose hope, for I somehow see in your face that you're inclined to despair!"

She was smoothing his temples with both hands, and at last she saw two large tears fall from his wistful eyes.

"Oh, Adalbert," she went on, in a voice rich with pitiful sweetness, "trust me, trust me, it may come; I am sure it *will* come!"

"Perhaps—in the current of things," he said.

And then they both laughed gently—she at his droll, changeless, philosophic obstinacy, he at the old, affectionate rebellion that it had always caused.



VERY STRANGE

BROOKS—Harduppe says he took a stranger for you yesterday.

RIVERS—That's funny. Now to-day he took me for a stranger.

"How's that?"

"He wanted to borrow \$10 from me."

EXCUSED!

I'VE waited your coming long and late,
 And saved myself for our tête-à-tête—
 'Tis rudeness to let a lady wait,
 O Mr. Affinity!

Mamma is worried, and heaves a sigh,
 And poor papa has an anxious eye.
 Where are you, I wonder? and why so shy,
 O Mr. Affinity?

Who knows but maybe a wind-swept curl,
 A moonlit night or a waltz's whirl
 Led you to propose to some other girl,
 O Mr. Affinity?

Ah, well, no matter; remain with her,
 And accept my congratulations, sir!
 You're not the man that I thought you were,
 O Mr. Affinity.

And—well, last night, when the world went dim,
 I found myself in the arms of Jim—
 And so I promised to marry *him*,
 O Mr. Affinity!

ETHEL M. KELLEY.



WISHED HIM WELL

COLLECTOR—I can't keep coming here every day about this bill.
 HARDRUN—Well, I hope you've struck a job that pays you better.



NO ROOM FOR DOUBT

BRONSON—Is Larkins fond of children?
 DAWSON—Must be. I understand he's going to marry and settle in Brooklyn.

FRISSENS DE NOS ÂMES

Par Michel Corday

DANS l'atelier du peintre Barjac, samedi dernier, nous étions une dizaine de bons amis—hommes et femmes. C'est le samedi que Barjac reçoit, quand le jour tombe et qu'il ne peut plus travailler. On cause de tout. On dit des histoires. Quelques unes ne sont pas mal. En voici deux de l'autre jour, que j'ai retenues.

"Les suiveurs!" dit Madame Fortuny. "Mais il n'y en a pas un d'intéressant. La preuve—c'est qu'aucune de nous ne leur doit la moindre aventure galante.

"Comment! ces gens-là, tout simplement parce qu'ils ont marché sur nos talons pendant une ou deux rues, s'imaginent que nous allons tomber dans leurs bras! Voilà bien de l'outrecuidance.

"Il en est de moins intéressés. Soit. Mais ils ne sont pas plus intéressants, en tout cas. Ceux par exemple, qui suivent une femme seule pour le plaisir bête et lâche de l'inquiéter et de l'affoler; elle ne peut ni détourner la tête, ni congédier l'intrus, sans paraître vouloir entrer en conversation. Elle ne peut que s'enfuir ou se réfugier dans un magasin, ou dans une voiture. Elle hésite, s'arrête, repart plus vite devant le suiveur ravi. Le joli sport, en vérité!

"Enfin, il y a les maniaques, ceux qu'hypnotisent les cheveux, la nuque, le dos—et le reste. Une femme passe, ils sont contraints de la suivre, comme s'ils étaient pris à la remorque, traînés par un fil invisible.

"En résumé, tous des sots ou des détraqués."

Ainsi en décida l'élégante femme

du banquier. Mais Madame Marpon, blonde, petite personne qui parlait les yeux baissés, intervint à son tour:

"Je crois qu'il y en a d'autres encore, ma chère amie—les rêveurs, les amants de la fantaisie. Ils suivent une femme comme on poursuit une chimère.

"Ce sont les poètes de la rue. Pour eux, un joli visage qui passe, c'est de l'idéal sous une voilette.

"Ils suivent une fine silhouette avec le plaisir de la regarder trotter, la crainte de l'effaroucher, et l'angoisse de la voir s'évanouir.

"Lorsqu'elle disparaît dans une maison, ils ne regardent pas le numéro. La muse s'est envolée. Étant sans espoir, ils restent sans regret.

"Ils recommencent le lendemain. Un jour, peut-être, un sourire tombera sur eux, dans un caprice d'aumône. Sevrés d'amour, pauvres diables! ils imaginent des romans superbes, comme ceux qui ont faim rêvent à des repas délicats. Ce sont les riches d'esprit, le royaume de l'irréalisable est à eux."

Alors, Madame Lucas, la femme du sculpteur bien connu, dit en secouant sa jolie tête:

"Le vrai, c'est que nous ne savons jamais qui nous suit. Le plus souvent en effet, c'est un sot; mais combien d'autres misères peuvent s'attacher à nos pas! Ah! c'est bien vraiment l'inconnu qui marche derrière nous!

"Il m'est arrivé un jour une toute mince, une toute brève aventure qui me l'a prouvé. La voici:

"Je rentrais chez moi, boulevard Berthier, quand je m'aperçus, rue de Courcelles, qu'un homme me suivait.

Ou plutôt, je le devinai, je sentis dans mon dos sa volonté d'être remarqué.

"D'un coup d'œil oblique dans ces miroirs imparfaits que forment les devantures des boutiques, j'aperçus sa silhouette—haute taille svelte, tenue d'été ample et claire, et le petit chapeau de feutre.

"Il me restait un assez long chemin à parcourir sur le boulevard Berthier, et j'avoue que je n'étais pas très rassurée. Vous connaissez le décor—d'un côté, la rangée nette des petits hôtels à baies d'atelier; de l'autre, les fortifications effritées, pelées, désertes.

"Pas une âme, pas une voiture.

"J'avais à la main un petit paquet de pâtisseries gourmandes. Je décidai: 'Au premier compliment, je lui envoie mon paquet à la figure, et je cours.'

"L'individu gagnait du terrain, malgré ma vive allure. Il s'approchait tellement que, dans le reflet d'une même fenêtre de rez-de-chaussée, j'apercevais nos deux silhouettes, la mienne penchée en avant, les coudes au corps, la sienne en costume clair, d'un chic tout à fait anglais.

"J'avais peur. Je songeai: 'Pourquoi est-ce moi qu'il suit? Me connaît-il? Que va-t-il me dire? Pourvu que ce ne soit pas trop grossier.'

"Vingt maisons me séparaient encore de la mienne quand il m'appela, d'une voix suppliante:

"Madame, madame!"

"Il se penchait presque sur mon épaule. Je vis d'un regard le boulevard désert, ma maison lointaine. Je sentis que je ne pourrais pas courir jusque-là. Alors d'un grand coup de décision désespérée, je me retournai:

"Laissez-moi tranquille, n'est-ce pas?"

"Ah! mes pauvres amies, je n'achevai même pas ma phrase. Comme le reflet des vitres m'avait trompée! L'homme était réellement habillé de vêtements de bonne coupe, mais dans quel état de délabrement! Le chapeau était bien de feutre, mais, par endroits, ciré, brillant comme une bottine. Et d'autres signes racontaient sa misère—le foulard, noué d'une épingle, et qui voilait l'absence

du linge, les souliers vernis crevés dans chaque pli; et tout le visage meurtri, comme sali de fatigue. Je restais immobile de stupéfaction.

"Il me dit:

"Je vous demande bien pardon, madame—j'ai faim—je vous jure que je n'ai pas mangé depuis trois jours, mais rien, rien, rien!"

"Pourquoi l'ai-je cru? On est armé de défiance, contre ces phrases-là, par les faux pauvres même. Et puis, c'est si difficile de s'imaginer, quand on a trouvé toute sa vie sa table servie, que des gens n'ont pas mangé.

"Je voulais encore douter, n'être pas dupe. Mais, tout à coup, je vis son regard—un regard doux et terrible de chien affamé, osciller en suivant le balancement de mon petit paquet de friandises au bout de sa ficelle rose.

"Et il disait:

"D'ordinaire, je dessine. Mais je n'ai pas de travail. Je n'ose pas encore entrer dans les asiles—j'ai honte. Vous êtes la première à qui je m'adresse, je vous jure. Ça me fait moins de mal de demander à une femme qu'à un homme.

"Donnez-moi n'importe quoi à manger, madame."

"Ses yeux visaient le petit paquet.

"Tenez, même ça—"

"J'étais si troublée de surprise, de pitié, que je lui tendis machinalement mes gâteaux.

"Il se jeta dessus, déchira le papier avec des mains d'amoureux, et avec une rapidité qui eût été risible partout ailleurs, il engouffra tout, les petits choux pralinés, les cerises déguisées, les pomponnettes au rhum, tout mon dessert. Croyez-vous!"

"Il se dépêchait tant qu'il avalait parfois les petits papiers gaufres qui enveloppent ces sucreries. Il oubliait sa honte, il m'oubliait. Et moi, je restais sans gestes, sans pensée, sans rien éprouver d'autres qu'un grand, qu'un infini besoin de pleurer.

"Ah! mon pauvre amoureux!"

"Quand il eut achevé, il s'aperçut que je le regardais; et avec un air égaré, comme ivre de sucre, il prononça cette phrase, à laquelle je songe à chaque dessert:

“Ah! madame, vous ne saurez jamais comme c'est bon!”

“Alors, je lui glissai une petite pièce d'or dans la main, et pour dire quelque chose en même temps, je murmurai assez sottement:

“Maintenant que vous avez mangé votre dessert, il faut aller dîner.”

“Et puis, je m'enfuis jusqu'à la maison, au milieu de ses remerciements éperdus. J'étais à la fois heureuse d'avoir fait un peu de bien, et navrée de cette misère pitoyable.

“Et, pour tout avouer, une petite, toute petite déception se mêlait à cette joie et à cette tristesse. Dame! après avoir cru être suivie pour moi-même!”

Elle se tut, puis, dans le grand silence, elle ajouta encore:

“C'est égal. Depuis, j'éprouve toujours un petit remords à presser le pas, sans détourner la tête, quand j'entends un homme marcher vite derrière moi. S'il avait faim!”

“En effet on peut avoir faim de toutes sortes de choses,” dit quelqu'un. Mais la plaisanterie resta sans écho.

II

PEU après, à un détour de la conversation, Pierre Lambert, qui a bien la plus ravissante femme qu'on puisse rêver, fut amené à nous conter ceci, qu'il appelait “Son Heure Intense:”

“Le mari qui n'a jamais découvert dans son courrier la photographie de sa femme enlacée dans les bras d'un inconnu,” dit-il, “imaginera difficilement les véhémentes pensées qui m'agitèrent devant cet irrécusable document.

“Je venais de découvrir cela par hasard en fouillant les tiroirs pour un papier quelconque. Mes mains tremblaient. J'étais étranglé de rage ahurie.

“Une lettre anonyme peut n'être qu'un tissu de mensonges, une calomnie est vite inventée, un billet vite écrit. Mais une photographie, une photographie vierge de tout maquillage reste le reflet fidèle de la vérité, n'est-ce pas?

“Et, comme un miroir aux images durables, ce muet témoin venait d'apporter dans ma paix profonde la preuve absolue qu'un homme avait tenu dans ses bras mon épouse consentante.

“J'étais seul au logis, je m'abîmai dans la contemplation de cette cruelle épreuve. Étrange instinct qui pousse un patient à écraser sa dent malade contre sa mâchoire serrée, à irriter d'un doigt fébrile un furoncle enflammé, dans l'espoir de calmer sa souffrance en l'exacerbant.

“La photographie qui m'était tombée aux mains, présentait les dimensions d'une carte de visite. Elle était tirée sur un papier de luxe émaillé de gélatine. Sous ce mince vernis, les détails apparaissaient avec une impitoyable finesse.

“Dans un décor de jardin, dont les taillis et les corbeilles n'éveillèrent aucun souvenir précis dans ma mémoire, le couple, debout, s'immobilisait dans son amoureuse attitude.

“L'homme se présentait presque de dos; on ne distinguait que sa chevelure savamment séparée en deux lobes touffus, et sa carrure élargie par la coupe d'une impeccable jaquette.

“Qui était-ce? Qui est que ça pouvait bien être?

“On devinait son visage penché vers celui de sa compagne, à longueur de moustache. De son bras visible, l'inconnu enlaçait la taille flexible de Madame Lambert.

“Qui diable était-ce? Nom d'un chien!

“Elle, ma femme, semblait s'abandonner très volontiers à cette mâle caresse qui, des seins aux genoux, l'amenait au contact de son partenaire. Même, elle avait, d'un geste charmant de grâce alanguie, posé sa main sur la robuste épaule du galant.

“Et, sous son grand chapeau fleuri, son visage souriait dans l'extase de la chaude étreinte.

“Le cœur torturé, je m'absorbai dans l'étude de ce clair rébus, dont je craignais bien de deviner trop facilement le mot.

“Pourtant, mon indignation se heurtait à de partielles énigmes.

"Sous l'empire de quelle folie ma femme avait-elle osé s'associer aussi étroitement à un homme, à la face du ciel?"

"Quelles mœurs, quel pays de perdition autorisaient de pareilles étreintes en plein soleil?"

"Par quel oubli de toute pudeur, de toute convenance, avaient-ils permis à un opérateur indiscret de garder de ce moment-là un souvenir durable et fidèle—un terrible témoin d'accusation?"

"Tout cela, agité entre mes tempes qui battaient la chamade, me demeurerait inconcevable."

"Mais enfin, au-dessus de ces doutes, une évidence planait. Madame Lambert—ma femme, nom de Dieu!—abandonnée aux bras d'un inconnu!"

"Devant la jolie petite photographie miroitante, je connus toutes les pénibles réflexions qu'inspire d'ordinaire pareille infortune."

"Vous riez? Moi, je ne rigolais pas, je vous en fiche mon billet!"

"Comme un bon bourgeois moral, je maudis la vie de Paris qui avait déroulé devant elle tant d'exemples et de tentations; je maudis mon large revenu qui lui avaient valu ces loisirs pernicioeux. La civilisation tout entière passa un mauvais quart d'heure; il est vrai qu'elle en a vu bien d'autres."

"Comme un tigre en cage, j'allais par l'appartement en me rongant les moelles, désirant ardemment le retour de la coupable."

"Tonnerre, nous allions voir!"

"Malgré moi, je souhaitais maintenant de connaître les conditions de l'étreinte intime. J'avais soif d'explications, de détails."

"Non sans cruauté, je songeai que l'accusée serait aussitôt confondue devant l'irréfutable preuve. Je me surpris à plaindre les maris obligés de torturer leur compagne pour lui arracher l'aveu d'un crime que dénonce une simple lettre, ou ceux qui doivent avoir recours au commissaire et à ses acolytes. Vraiment, la petite épreuve émaillée paraissait moins pénible. Et je mâchonnais des préparations de discours."

"Mais quand j'entendis le coup de sonnette de l'épouse, je fus pris de peur. J'éprouvai une sorte de subit dévoilement de la mémoire. Bien des divorces doivent être nécessaires pour rompre un homme à ces émotions-là."

"Et quand elle entra, jolie, pimpante, joyeuse, je ne sus que balbutier d'une voix rauque, d'une voix nouvelle, en désignant d'un doigt tremblant la petite photographie:"

"Qui est-ce qui te . . . ?"

"Madame Lambert ne soupçonnait pas l'orage. Souriante, elle pencha sur mon épaule son buste tout parfumé de l'air frais du dehors; et d'une voix tranquille, vraiment sincère, elle prononça:"

"Comment? tu n'as pas reconnu? Ce *garden party* chez les Rasto—où le petit Rasto m'a prise en instantané pendant que je valsais sur la pelouse."

"Elle valsait! merci, Dieu juste!"

"En instantané! merci, Dieu bon!"

"Je pensai défaillir d'aise."

"Eh bien! qu'est-ce que tu as?" interrogea l'épouse, inquiète devant ce trouble inexplicable.

"Ce que j'avais? Je ne me sentais pas capable de l'expliquer. Tout le lourd édifice de colère, de pantelant amour-propre et de jalousie, échafaudé sur mon pauvre cœur, s'écroulait au souffle bienfaisant du tout puissant, de l'invincible préjugé."

"Car enfin c'est du pur préjugé."

"Immobile, l'étreinte était un crime."

"Mobile, elle devenait un jeu!"

"Eh bien, tout de même, c'était si délicieux, ce brusque apaisement de détente dans la bêtise humaine, que je n'en percevais pas l'énorme ironie."

"Ah! maudite photographie, qui m'avait donné l'illusion d'un enlacement fixe! Mais, non! le couple tournait—donc, l'honneur était sauf!"

"En tournant, on peut se murmurer lèvres à lèvres tous les mots d'amour qui seraient coupables si l'on ne tournait pas."

"En tournant, une moustache peut chatouiller une joue qui rougirait si elle ne tournait pas."

“En tournant, on peut risquer tous les gestes inquisiteurs, peloteurs, qui seraient mortellement injurieux si l'on ne tournait pas!

“Voyez-vous cette photographie qui donnait l'illusion d'une Madame Lambert les yeux dans le yeux, les genoux dans les genoux, la poitrine contre la poitrine de son cavalier? et tous deux immobiles au milieu de ce jardin? Dieu merci, ce n'était qu'un instantané. L'étreinte était anodine, puisqu'elle marchait.

“Je rendis intérieurement grâce à nos admirables mœurs, qui ne découlent peut-être pas absolument de la saine logique, mais qui me sauvaient

de l'atroce situation dont je venais d'entrevoir l'amertume.

“Puis un grand remords me prit en songeant à ma pauvre femme que j'avais soupçonnée de se laisser prendre la taille par un galant, de lui sourire lèvre à lèvre, sur l'absurde témoignage d'une photographie. Fi donc, monsieur—elle valsait!

“Et bouleversé par tant de brusques émotions, je me jetais soudain, comme un grand imbécile, aux pieds de mon épouse stupéfaite; et l'âme noyée de reconnaissance et de regret, je criais en sanglotant, la tête cachée dans sa robe:

““Oh! pardon, ma chérie, pardon!””



THE DEATH-CHILD

'T WAS thrice I asked him whence he came,
'T was thrice he smiled and said me nay;
Yet there were those who stood without
And swore that none had passed that day.

But I—I know I saw him steal
So softly through the wind and rain
That all the sound he made was less
Than if a bird had moaned in pain.

I snatched my baby to my breast—
I felt his breathing, soft and warm,
But ne'ertheless, I could not lose
That haunting sense of wild alarm.

And in the nights I weep for fear
Lest once again the death-child pass,
And this time leave, close by his own,
Another footprint in the grass!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



NOTHING BUT TIME

BANKS—Is your wife out much, shopping?
RIVERS—No; her time isn't worth anything.

WILLIAM TELL UP TO DATE

HE wouldn't bow down to the tyrant's hat
At the top of the market pole,
And Gessler was more than enraged thereat
To the depths of his very soul.

And so he decreed with a grin elate:
"I will make Tell suffer for this;
I will give him a taste of the fruit of fate
That will make him cavort, I wis!"

And the tyrant he gnashed his teeth and said:
"Bring forward his offspring small,
And place on the top of his golden head
A nice little white golf ball.

"Blindfolded, the father his driver free
Shall swing with all power and force
At his fair son's head, which shall be the tee,
All the way round the nine-hole course."

Oh, the little fellow was brought forth then,
And his courage ne'er fell or failed,
Though a chill went over the strongest men
And the women all wept and wailed.

'Twas then at the ball on the head so fair
That the blindfolded Tell let fly.
And with aim most rare did he hit it square,
And it flew to the cloudless sky.

He did it again at the second tee
And the third, and his little son
Danced wholly unhurt in his perfect glee
At the ninth, when that hole was done.

As the ball in each hole lit on the fly,
Said William, with merriment fine,
"You all will kindly take notice that I
Did the blooming nine holes in 9!"

And Gessler's rage, that had blossomed red-hot,
Simmered down till it ceased to flame,
While W. T. he engaged on the spot
To teach him the tricks of the game.

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

THE MESTIZA

By Mrs. William Allen

STRUGGLING through a bamboo jungle, with her hands, face and neck lacerated by the cactus plant and "Spanish bayonet," and blinded by the rain, which came down so heavily that it was next to impossible to stand up against it, a woman, unmindful of everything but her purpose, strove violently to push on in spite of the darkness, in spite of the seeming hopelessness of her position, the only living being in that thick cluster of tropical shrub.

"God give me strength to get there," she murmured.

At last her poor, tired feet came in contact with something firmer than the miles of bog she had traversed. Throwing her arms out in front of her, she felt an obstacle.

Tears of relief rolled down her cheeks, for she realized that she had reached a refuge from the tempest.

It was a deserted *nipa* hut. Pushing aside the fibre curtain, she fell unconscious into the space within.

The day had far advanced when she opened her startled eyes. Over a bog fire an old, half-naked Filipino soldier was boiling rice in a tin can such as American soldiers use for water. Hearing her sigh, he turned and limped over to the spot where she lay. He looked at her long and earnestly, saying, in his soft, labial language:

"What is the beautiful Teresita of Porac doing at Imus, so far from her home and friends?"

"Ask me no questions, kind Lunas, but share thy breakfast and cup of wine with me, and for the Virgin's sake help me."

Taking off her mantilla, woven from the silk of the sugar cane, she handed it to Lunas, who spread it before the burning bog; then he assisted her to untangle her long cable of black hair, that, when unloosened, curtained her entire body.

Teresita was the handsomest, the bravest, the best loved peasant maid in the whole island of Luzon. She was the only daughter of Alandrino, a half-breed native and a secret spy for the American soldiers.

"How great a distance are we from Angeles, Lunas?"

"By what warrant or authority goest thou to Angeles, girl?"

"By a guarantee from heaven, Lunas, which I cannot divulge. Listen, listen! hearest thou something besides the roaring of the wind and the fall of the rain?"

Hurrying from the hut, Lunas saw a company of Bolos. After speaking with them a few minutes, he returned to tell her the young captain consented to her going with them to Angeles.

Her eyes glowed with excitement. She followed him into the rain. For hours the company advanced, sometimes wading streams up to their necks. They reached the Bacoor River, where Captain Madrazino called a halt.

Teresita pleaded against a bivouac, urging them all to sleep, and offering to watch in their stead, as she was fresh from the rest she had taken in the *nipa* hut. Leading the captain's mule away, she staked it to a palm tree. Begging a *bolo* knife from one of the soldiers, she stuck it into her hide girdle, tightened her mantilla

NOTE.—*Mestizas* are half-breed women of Spanish and native parentage, noted for their beauty.

about her, and walked to and fro until silence reigned over the camp.

Then wrapping her *pina* scarf close about her head, she untethered the mule, and slowly, stealthily led it out of the jungle. Mounting the beast, she rode away from Angeles. It was Paranaque she was anxious to reach, not Angeles.

Passing silently and carefully down the steep hill, she came to the river. The rain had ceased, but the night was dark and damp. A slender new moon lay low down in the eastern sky, and the lizards sang in weird cadence from the trunks and limbs of every tree.

She crossed the stream, the loose poles of the straight bamboo bridge rattling with a hollow sound.

Three miles away over the valley rose the low mountain range, obscured by the mists and the darkness. On, on she rode, forgetful of her long fast, miserably exhausted, but sustained by her unfaltering courage.

Arriving at last in Paranaque, she was dragged before the Filipino general.

"I was with a company of Bolo soldiers, who were captured at Imus," she said. "I escaped in the middle of the night, and am here to ask thy protection until I can return to my people."

Crossing herself and raising her eyes to heaven, she asked her guardian angel to forgive her this first lie, that she had been carefully rehearsing over and over to herself.

Her magnificent beauty was her passport, and she was turned over to the women.

She worked with them for days. She sang to the soldiers, she cleaned their weapons, she cooked for them, until her patience was well-nigh spent.

One day, sitting under the shade of a banana tree, a young Filipino soldier handed her a rifle. "Polish the lock and barrel well, Teresita, for in two days we shall shoot to death the American captain whom we captured at San Pedro Macati—Heavens! what ails thee, maid? art thou ill?"

"No, Fernando, 'tis the heat.

Where are the prisoners kept—the wicked American soldiers who have come to steal our islands from us? Wilt thou lead me to the place, so I can breathe curses upon them?"

"I will show you where the captain is, for I must watch him with José to-night. He is locked in a hut at the other end of the lagoon."

If anyone in Paranaque had been suspicious of Teresita, they would have wondered why she led her mule to water at the shallow lake that evening and then tethered it there for the night. Three hours later every living thing, save the locusts and frogs, was asleep. Even Fernando and José, who were keeping guard over the *nipa* hut, were dozing.

"Who goes there?" they cried, starting to their feet.

"'Tis thy friend, Teresita, who brings thee wine; the mist is so thick and the night is so damp. I secured this for thee, Fernando and José, to strengthen thee to watch well over the American and not let him escape."

"Here's my promise for a sure aim, maid, and blessings on thee!" cried Fernando, draining the bottle of native wine to the dregs, and imitated by José.

"Why can't these savages let me sleep? They starve me, they torture me, they deny me every privilege of humanity! What is that burrowing—that scraping noise? For hours now it has continued. What's that? Who calls? Great God! is it deliverance?"

"Capitan, capitan, come to the back of the hut; put thy ear to the ground, where my voice guides thee," whispered someone in Spanish. After locating the sound, the captain placed his ear to the bamboo floor. "I am here," he replied, in the same tongue.

"Capitan, it is Teresita of Porac, whom thou saved from the drunken soldier; who nursed thee with the fever; who swore to be thy slave—to die for thee if need be. Put thy hand through the hole and I will give thee a *bolo* knife. Now cut away the hole from the inside and I will do the same

from the outside, so as to make it large enough for me to enter the hut with thee. I have drugged thy guards. It is nearly dawn, capitan; work as fast as thou canst."

The aperture rapidly widened. At last, placing her arms together over her head, in the position one takes when diving, she was able to work her way through into the room.

He grasped her hands and kissed them. "Teresita, my friend, my brave girl!" he exclaimed, gratefully. "How did you get here? Why have you jeopardized your life for me?"

"I will answer thee, capitan, later on. We have not a minute to spare. I have brought thee the clothes of the tallest woman in the settlement. I have on two of everything." Slipping off one skirt, she put it over his head and secured it with his belt, which she filled with cartridges taken from Fernando. She gave him two pistols, then clasped a mantilla round his neck.

It was pitch dark, so dark that you could not see your hand before your face. He heard a rasping, peculiar noise.

"What is it, Teresita?"

"Something that is necessary for thy disguise, capitan." She had twisted a rope of her hair tight together and sawed it off with her *bolo* knife, securing it with a strong piece of cord. She tied the cord around his throat, and the hair hung in a braid like hers down his back. Then she wound a *pina* scarf round and round his head and the lower part of his face, to hide his month-old beard.

She bade him go through the opening first, then followed him down the side of the lagoon to where the mule was waiting. She sprang to its back and made him sit sideways behind her.

The day was breaking, and the eastern sky presented a whole spectrum of exquisite color.

She turned away from the lake, guiding the mule straight to the encampment.

"Capitan, take my beads, bend thy head, hold them in thy hands as if in prayer." Turning the mule's head in the direction of a group of soldiers, she called out: "Please bring me the pack-baskets. Madre Maria is going to help me pick mangoes."

They placed the baskets over the mule's neck for her, not noticing her companion.

The sentry was passed in safety with the countersign. Then she gave the captain something to eat and drink that she had concealed in the baskets.

"Teresita," he uttered, softly, "this is the second time I owe my life to you. I had resigned myself to my fate, and had made up my mind to die like a soldier. No word, no last message, could I leave for my people. My guards spoke neither Spanish nor English. I had fallen into a doze, after an agony of despair, when your *bolo* striking against the hut awoke me."

A gleam of love sprang to the girl's eyes for an instant, but her tears blotted it out.

Making a detour through the jungle, traveling thus all day and nearly half the night, with pauses only to rest and feed the mule, they reached an outpost of the Ninth Infantry, near San Fernando, where they reposed until day, the captain not revealing his identity. The next morning they were taken before the general in command. Thrusting his guards aside, the captain tore off his disguise.

Such salvos of welcome as he received, such rejoicings at the return of the old comrade, the brave captain who led them, without fear, up the hill of San Pedro Macati! Captured and mourned as dead, and now liberated by the ingenuity of a Filipino girl—the surprise, the delight and the gratitude were unbounded.

Teresita received the praise of all with dignity and modesty.

One evening, a week later, the general sent for her to tell her to prepare to leave the next day for Porac, where he would send her in

safety; that they were on the eve of a battle, and it would be dangerous for her to remain.

If he had ordered her to be executed she would have suffered less; but bowing her head, she left his house without a word.

When she knew the captain was asleep she glided into his tent. He was lying, fully dressed, on his blanket. Kneeling by his side, with her eyes filled with tears, she whispered, in her mother's language: "Ah, captain, I love thee! Thou wilt never know it, but I love thee, love thee! With all my heart and soul and strength I love thee! I cannot think of losing thee! Love is stronger than duty, love is stronger than religion, love is stronger than any curse! I want thy living heart to answer my heart!"

The captain had heard every word. He had intended to let her go from him with the thought that her secret was safe; but his love caught fire at hers, and there in his sheltering arms, at rest she lay.

Indeed, he thought he loved her. He pitied her, and loved her love for him.

Of a sudden sounded the shots from the enemy's Mausers, then a bugle-call "To arms!"

Springing to his feet, he clasped her to his breast in a long embrace, heart resting on heart. Bending back her head, he looked deep into her passionate, despairing eyes. Then the rattle of musketry, another bugle-call, a long, clinging kiss, a sob . . . and snatching up his sword, he rushed from the tent.

"Fall in, men!" rang his command. "Close up! Double quick—charge!"

The next day Teresita was sent with an escort to her home.

Three months after the scene in the tent, at the twilight hour, the bells of a church were tolling an invitation to all in Porac.

The Filipino men and women streamed into the holy place, responsive to the call. There were brightly bedecked women, more somberly

dressed old men, sharp-eyed, slightly built boys. A girl, graceful and beautiful, and clothed in a dark-red gown, glided from her seat through the door, and sought to escape observation behind a stone pillar. But her movements did not escape the quick eye of a Filipino soldier. He approached her and whispered, insolently:

"Thou art here, art thou, Teresita? Every soldier in our army knows that thou didst liberate the captain, the enemy of thy country, at Paranaque. We are assembled here to ask God to make us victorious in the battle we are about to fight at any moment. What art thou doing here? Dost thou think we will let thee carry news again to thy lover, the captain, who laughs at thee, who uses thee? Thou art to be shot as a spy!" Then, changing his tone to one of entreaty: "Come away with me, Teresita! I have loved thee always. Marry me now—here—at once, and they will spare thy life!"

"I cannot, Raimundo; I love him, *mi capitan*, who does not love me. It is the way of love. I will marry no man now."

There was bitter sorrow in her accents. Raimundo watched her intently, not venturing to speak, and pallid with his emotion.

Suddenly her hand went up, and a pistol shot rang out.

There was a commotion among the worshippers and a rush for the door. Raimundo uttered a cry of anger and surprise.

"Damn!" he exclaimed, drawing his sword and rushing at Teresita. "What hast thou done? Why didst thou fire that pistol? Ah, Dios, I know! Come, one and all—gaze upon her, this serpent, this traitress. She hath given her lover the signal to enter the town!"

His jealousy, his love of country, his passion, made him forget all else. But one minute later he realized that he had signed her death sentence. The howling, excited, outraged mob seized her.

"We will make an example of her

to all her kind!" they shrieked. "A quick death is too merciful. Draw back your knives; we will burn her at the stake—the faithless wanton, the *mestiza*!" They pushed and dragged her and tore her clothes in their frenzy. Two rough Tagalos pinioned her, while the crowd built her pyre with old barrels, casks, canes, dried bamboo, palmetto leaves—anything they could lay their hands on. They were made wild, mad, by the enormity of her crime. Two religious fanatics made a rough cross and nailed it in the middle of the pile.

"The signal was for naught, betrayer, except to show us what thou art! They can never take the town, for our men are stationed behind strong breastworks. We will let thee put the match to the faggots, Raimundo. What! dost thou falter? Art thou a traitor, too?"

"Spare her life, my countrymen, I implore thee! Give her to me as wife, and we will leave the island."

"No, no; she is safe only when dead. Light the pyre—light it from every corner—ah, now bind her to the cross!"

Raising her eyes to heaven she whispered, "Receive my soul, I pray Thee, my Saviour. I have sinned only against myself. My love warned me to light a bonfire as signal in case they heard not my pistol. The burning of my poor body is his signal fire. I would have it no other way. It is better so—he will understand now that my love was the love that passeth all understanding. Ah, they have seen the signal. Let me live, oh God, to see him once more!"

The flames had reached her feet. Raimundo had been shot for raising his rifle to his shoulder to put her out of her agony.

"By the grace of God!" the mob cried, "their artillery are firing on our fortifications that cross the road. Run, run! they are upon us!" Nearer and nearer came the enemy, an American officer, with a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other, charging at the head of two battalions over a stretch of country as level as a

table, driving the rebels from the finest kind of intrenchments. The crash of guns, the bursting of the shells, the shouts of the men scattering the Filipinos like quail, then—

"Porac is ours, boys! Three cheers for Teresita!"

The cry brought the girl back to consciousness, for she had fainted from agony. She made a supreme effort, shrieking and struggling, trying with all her might and main to burst the ropes that bound her to the cross.

When the triumphant soldiers reached the churchyard, that was shadowed by the old stone church and tall palmettos, a sight confronted them never to be forgotten by one of those four hundred men. A woman bound to a cross, her arms held out in supplication, the strong east wind blowing her long, black hair about her face, and the flames licking and spluttering, and burning her legs to a crisp.

"Great God, it is Teresita!" they shouted, realizing instantly the sacrifice she had made for them. They stamped out the fire and the officers cut the ropes that bound her. With a shivering cry of agony she fell into the captain's arms.

"This is the end," she whispered. "Kiss me once again, my capitan, my love. Death is sweet to me now. I followed love, but death has followed me. I loved thee so dearly, but my love had no return. I prayed to die, for life without thee would be a mockery. I will watch over thee from heaven now, capitan." She turned her eyes to the men. "Good-bye, comrades," she gasped; "don't cry; you won't have time to miss me long. Ah, I am slipping from thee, capitan. It is growing dark, dark. . . . Press thy heart close against mine. . . . *Adios, mi capitan.*"

Her head fell forward on his breast, "and life went nightwards with the setting sun."

When the taps are sounding the requiem for Teresita, her soul is listening to the reveille in heaven.

THE FALLEN STAR

A MAN once loved a star, pure, radiant, white,
 And sought to reach it, scaling many a height.
 With climbing weary and half-faint, he pressed
 Onward and upward to the topmost crest.
 Still distant in the vast of heaven's span
 Shone the white light upon the way-worn man.
 Then, humbly prayerful, gazing from afar,
 He breathed his passion to the clear white star!
 And lo! the star leaped down and changed to fire
 To meet the ardor of the man's desire.
 From out the galaxy it made complete,
 It trailed its glory at its lover's feet.

He stooped not! With hands stretching toward the place
 His star had filled in the great vaulted space,
 He wailed in anguish, through the darkened night:
 "Alas! the star I loved was white, was white!"

ELISABETH R. FINLEY



GETTING HER START

LAKESIDE—Is he her first husband?
 LA SALLE—Yes; she is an amateur.



THE MODERN WAY

IN days long ago the fond lover would vow
 Eternal affection, and sing
 The praise of his love 'neath her window—but now
 We've grown out of that sort of thing.

The old-fashioned pledge by the bright stars above
 Is rather played out and effete;
 We live in more practical times, dearest love—
 Let's go and have something to eat!

E. PERCY NEVILLE.

THE LITTLE CHAPERON

By Michael Carmichael

PEOPLE now began to understand, and exchanged significant smiles when the little company of three appeared in public. Some were indignant and said the girl was not treated right; these were generally men. Others, chiefly women who had *affaires* of their own, would say to one another, when the subject was mentioned, "Oh, she's awfully clever; but, of course, it had to come out some time!"

Meanwhile, the three persons under this fire of social comment seemed as invulnerable as if encased in the armor of complete innocence. They could not be ignorant of the malicious gossip; but perhaps they remembered that admirable advice, "You're not hurt if you don't cry out."

It was the woman who had suggested the arrangement. She had said to her friend one day, "Don't you want to go with Ethel and me to see 'Mefistofele?'" Of course he was delighted, and that was the beginning of a long series of visits to operas, parties, concerts, plays and teas which Hugh Creswold made in the company of Mrs. Edward Grahame and her pretty daughter. Charming, as everyone admitted, was the dainty young girl of nineteen, with her mother's good looks and all the added attraction of youth and high spirits. At the theatre she always sat between Mrs. Grahame and their escort, who seemed, if possible, more attentive to the daughter than to the mother. Strangers assumed it was a family party, and commented on the fascinating group—so handsome, so high-bred, so beautifully dressed.

Their friends were at first deceived. They thought the man had transferred his interest to the fresher face. They knew the family acquaintance was of long standing, for Mrs. Grahame spoke of it frequently and frankly, and they considered it a mark of the mother's cleverness that she had secured this eligible *parti* for her daughter. Both the man and the woman carried their years well, and not until the lovely Ethel appeared in public did many people realize that Mrs. Grahame must be dangerously near the age that mocks at any pretense to youth. It was then her friends began to talk more of her cleverness than of her beauty.

When the daughter came out at a tea her mother gave, the women smiled at each other in knowing fashion. "She did well," they said; "the girl ought to have come down stairs a year ago!"

On this occasion Mr. Grahame was visible, much to the surprise of everyone. "I always understood there was a Mr. Grahame," said Mrs. Reginald Courthouse, "and sometimes I thought I heard his chains clanking in the basement as I came up the steps. I must go and see how an escaped prisoner conducts himself." To her friends Mrs. Grahame said, as she presented the ruddy-faced man, obviously ill at ease, "I have insisted upon this dear man's leaving his business for once. When our only child makes her appearance in society even business ought to give way." She was herself more attractive, if possible, than usual, and made her little speech in an arch way, with a smile for the tall man beside her and another for the

slender, flushed, happy girl at her left hand.

"It's a triumph—a veritable *coup*," said Howard Crosspurpose to Mrs. Courthouse.

"Oh, yes! She's a charming girl; almost as young as her mother."

He laughed. "I didn't mean that; although your penetration is wonderful. I meant producing the husband. I never believed there was one."

"Perhaps he's hired for the occasion," replied that vivacious woman, whose witticisms had gained piquancy since her divorce suit.

When Hugh Creswold appeared in front of Mrs. Grahame he took momentary advantage of a conversation on either side to say, in a low tone, "*Filia pulchra matre pulchrione*." She shook her head in smiling reproof at the man who had danced attendance on her these many years. "You must be as nice to Ethel as you have always been to me," she said, gaily, as they both turned to the radiant young creature in white mull and pink roses.

"Isn't it jolly, Mr. Creswold?" cried the girl, giving him her hand and smiling with the frankest of blue eyes. "You don't recognize me! do you?"

"Who recognized Cinderella at the party?" he answered. "I've only seen you at the hearthstone, you know. You're simply perfect," he added, looking at her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. "How proud your mamma is!" turning his eyes to the mature beauty, who was saying to a friend, "I told him he simply must leave his business this time."

"Isn't she?" the girl said, quickly. "Was there ever such a beautiful mother! I look at her in despair."

He smiled. "I believe you're as proud of her as she is of you. Your father is too fortunate! I wonder does he remember the Greeks thought men should never arouse the envy of the gods."

"You'd spoil us if mother and I were not so *very* sensible!" she laughed, as he turned away to make room for a young man whom Mrs.

Grahame brought up at that moment to present to her fair daughter.

After the *début* Creswold saw much more of the girl, not only in her own home but at all the functions, where she accompanied her mother. At these places he always brought them tea and found them chairs, and put them in their carriage with a rare courtesy that had great charm for both women. In time the girl fell into the habit of appealing to him when her mother's decisions were adverse, almost as if he had been the father she saw at dinner on the few evenings she now had at home. "Don't you think she might let me go to the theatre with Tom Goodfellow?" she asked him.

"Without a chaperon!" exclaimed Mrs. Grahame, who laid great stress on the proprieties.

"I don't care, mamma; lots of girls go to the theatre without a chaperon; that's an old-fashioned idea! I wish he had asked you, but he didn't. Don't you think, Mr. Creswold, she might let me go? He's an awfully nice fellow!"

"He's an awfully poor fellow, unfortunately!" commented Mrs. Grahame, and there the matter ended.

A year passed, and the three seemed even more in evidence at first nights, receptions, in the Park. A striking group they made—the girl fascinating in her youth and pretty coloring, the elder woman radiant in her mature beauty, and the man tall, stately, chivalrous in manner. Once Mr. Grahame had lifted up his voice and shaken his chains. "Is Creswold making love to the girl?" he demanded.

His wife looked him squarely in the eyes. "Stupid boy! no! he's only nice to her. You know you'll never go out with us."

The man shook his chains again. "But doesn't he keep away the young fellows?"

"Absurd!" she laughed. "Why, he's older than I am. Ethel thinks of him as we all do—the family friend. It's simply lovely of him, the dear old bachelor, to do so much for the

girl. In spite of all your grubbing, we don't have enough money; I don't like to mention it, but you compel me. Think of all he does for the girl—flowers, tickets, carriages, presents! I despise myself for mentioning it. He's rich, handsome, clever, popular, and it's really an advantage to Ethel to have him in her train. When the right young man appears, I'll see that Creswold isn't in the way."

It was a long speech for Mrs. Grahame to make to her husband, and he was silenced. In the house her word was imperative. He knew her ability, and he trusted his daughter to her as he did his dinner—and the culinary confidence had never been betrayed.

There were always men around—elderly men who chatted with the mother, young men who laughed with the daughter; but they came and went, while Hugh Creswold remained, a constant figure, whose position as attendant and guardian was tacitly recognized. Other people now said: "*Filia pulchra matre pulchriore.*" Mrs. Fitzwilliams, elderly, near-sighted, outspoken and kind-hearted, had noticed a difference in his attentions to mother and daughter, and one day, after the two had left the room, blurted out, to everyone's amusement: "It's my opinion it's still Mrs. Grahame and not that pretty slip of a girl he's devoted to."

"Oh, how awfully wicked of you, dear Mrs. Fitzwilliams!" cried Mrs. Courthouse, in mock horror. "Can you think, for a moment even, that Mrs. Grahame is not the dearest of women, the most prudent of wives, the most—" she hesitated a moment—"the most self-sacrificing of mothers?"

Mrs. Fitzwilliams gave a keen look at the vivacious young woman whose apparently innocent remarks appeared to provoke the merriment of her friends. The amusement in Mrs. Courthouse's eyes belied the horror in her voice, and Mrs. Fitzwilliams flushed slightly as it dawned on her sober consciousness that this gay

woman, who had not passed wholly unscathed through her divorce suit, although it was argued on the ground of desertion, was laughing at her. But she rose to the occasion and provided a new *plaisanterie* for the club-room and tea table.

"My dear Mrs. Courthouse, I must be mistaken; I should never think of questioning your knowledge of what constitutes a self-sacrificing mother."

"Ouch!" said Godfrey Countryclub, when he heard the story. "You know, ever since the divorce Mrs. Courthouse's daughter—she must be a pretty big girl now—has lived with her grandmother."

Mrs. Courthouse's training in the witness box now stood her in good stead. Whatever her feelings, not even a bit of color betrayed them. She smiled at Mrs. Fitzwilliams, in her false front and thick glasses, and said, in a caressing tone: "It's just too lovely of you, my dear Mrs. Fitzwilliams, to accept the opinion of a woman who is so very, very much younger than yourself."

It was now an understood thing that all three were invited together. "Mr. Creswold, won't you bring Mrs. Grahame and Miss Ethel to me next week? Wednesdays, you know," asked Madame Marlborough; and meeting mother and daughter in the next room a few minutes later, she said: "I have asked Mr. Creswold to bring you both next Wednesday. Don't fail me. Some of the opera people are coming."

"The little chaperon" they had named the girl, who had never betrayed the first sign of understanding the situation. They even jested about the matter, more or less openly. "How well trained the mother is!" they said. "Such a credit to her daughter! Of course, the daughter approves of him, or she would not let him accompany her mother everywhere!"

At the clubs they were betting on the girl's knowledge. "Ten to one she knows. It's been going on too long. She isn't a fool," said Countryclub to his chum, Featherweight.

That was the question agitating society: Did the girl suspect?

Mrs. Fitzwilliams was sorry for the girl as well as curious, and uttered a warning. "Your mother and you always seem like two sisters," she said, kindly, one afternoon; "she looks so young and pretty, and receives so much attention."

Ethel gave a quick glance at her mother, to whom Creswold was just offering tea. "Isn't she lovely?" she answered, with the frankest gaze into the double lenses of her friend's eyeglasses. "I tell Creswold—" for six months she had called him by his last name, as her mother did—"I shall never really count him among my victims."

Mrs. Fitzwilliams looked dazed. Even her double lenses failed her. Was it the frankness of unparalleled innocence or the boldness of long-practiced deceit? "Ah, my dear, you will win. It's right youth should," and the kind-hearted, perplexed old lady walked away to hold a council with the other dowagers.

Mrs. Courthouse was bolder. She was aggressively curious regarding the extent of the girl's knowledge. "If she doesn't know, she ought to!" she declared.

Mrs. Courthouse took the jocular tone that suited her; no one was ever surprised at her boldness. "It's the divorce trial," her friends said when her thought appeared before it was decently clothed. "I say, Ethel," she remarked, "your mother's positively stunning this afternoon! I never saw her look so well. I don't wonder Creswold's infatuated!"

She had struck out fiercely, but she never knew where she had hit, or even if she had touched the girl, who answered, without a moment's pause, "Oh, we're all infatuated with mamma! I made her wear that gown; she looks as if she had just come from Madame Modiste's show case!"

Mrs. Courthouse recovered herself and made another lunge, more reckless than the first. "My dear, she actually looks as young as you do. She's your most dangerous rival!"

But the girl stood her ground, and parried the second blow as she had the first. "How deliciously absurd! I shall tell her what you say! Such a compliment!"

The older woman dragged herself away and went to her trainers for consultation. "I really can't tell whether the girl's a fool or more clever than her mother—if that's possible."

"She must be clever if she takes you in, Mrs. Courthouse," said Godfrey Countryclub. "Now, I never could take you in; you always see through my little schemes. You're an awfully clever woman, Mrs. Courthouse, don't you know, and if you're beat there's no use of anybody else trying."

"Well, at any rate, I've dropped a seed that I think will come up some day," she answered tartly, annoyed at her failure.

"We'll pray for rain," the man answered, moving away.

A few evenings later Hugh Creswold and the ladies were leaving the theatre, slowly making their way along the crowded aisle, stared at by many curious and admiring faces. Ethel was behind her mother and Creswold, who were chatting with some friends, and was detained a moment by some people leaving their seats, when she overheard a scrap of conversation:

"There she is! Don't you see her?—the girl in a blue wrap, with the light hair!"

"Is that the little chaperon? Where's the mother and her *preux chevalier*?"

"Just ahead of her—the blonde woman in a light cloak, and the tall man——"

Ethel shook visibly, and her face flushed. What had she heard? What did it mean? There came to her mind the recent remarks of Mrs. Fitzwilliams and Mrs. Courthouse. She stole a glance at the women who had pointed her out. She did not know them. They were the sort of women she had seen in the Park and in shops, but not in drawing-rooms. "So everybody sees what I do not

see!" She was hot with shame for herself, for her mother. What was to be done? In a few minutes they were in the vestibule, and the cold night air was grateful. It strengthened her. She would wait and see.

"Ethel, come! here's the carriage!" Mr. Creswold exclaimed, and escaping from the crowd, they were driven to a fashionable restaurant for supper. There were many familiar faces there. The girl fancied she saw a mischievous look in Mrs. Courthouse's eyes as they exchanged bows. That irrepressible individual was the centre of a group of four men and another woman. Something she was saying made them all laugh, just as they turned to recognize Mrs. Grahame's party.

"Are you tired, Ethel?"

"Yes, a little, mamma. Don't mind me. I don't want anything."

"A glass of wine will do you good, Ethel," said Creswold, kindly.

The girl sat quiet, pretending to drink her wine while her mother and their escort discussed the play. "I criticise all these plays," Mrs. Grahame was saying, "because they give one such an exaggerated idea of love. In poetry and novels and plays one gets the impression that love is the greatest thing in the world. But where do we see any proof of it in real life?"

"We can't wear our hearts on our sleeves for gossips to peck at," he answered, smiling; "besides, it would compromise the woman. There are women in real life who inspire the grand passion," he added. "I have known them."

"You appear to have survived," she retorted, vivaciously, "and you don't show any indications of suffering. And so it is always," she continued. "On the stage we see passion; in real life we see friendship, esteem, mutual liking. Yes, affection; but not *la grande passion de l'amour*. Women will run the risk of being compromised merely because they want devotion."

"You are all alike," he said, with a smile; "capricious sovereigns. Nothing satisfies you except absolute sur-

render. The knight must spring into the arena after my lady's glove!"

"Well," came her swift reply, "as the men of to-day are afraid of the lions, why should the dramatist represent them as lion-hearted?"

"My dear Mrs. Grahame, only give us the opportunity! Encourage us! Tempt us!"

They had apparently forgotten Ethel, who sat listening intently to their conversation. It was not different from many discussions she had heard, in which she had frequently borne her part. Love was a favorite topic in the circle of her mother's friends. There were differences, however, in the method of approach. Mrs. Courthouse took cross-country runs and jumped ditches and forded streams, with a bold disregard for her moral state of mind when the meet was over. Mrs. Fitzwilliams was worldly wise, but kindly in her comment. Mrs. Grahame was romantic, while her daughter was frankly curious. The conversation this evening seemed unusually interesting, and was prolonged until they were almost alone in the restaurant, when the girl broke out: "Let's go home, mother! I'm dead tired."

The next afternoon Mrs. Grahame entered her daughter's room, with bonnet and gloves on, exquisitely dressed as usual, and fresh from the little nap she invariably gave herself after luncheon. "Aren't you dressed yet?" she asked, in surprise. "It's four o'clock, and I want to pay those visits before the tea."

"I'm not going, mother!"

"Not going!" Mrs. Grahame echoed.

"I suppose Mr. Creswold will be there?" the girl demanded.

"Yes; he said so last night."

"Mother, how dare you! It's infamous!"

Mrs. Grahame sank into a chair and opened wide her infantile blue eyes. Her look was one she had cultivated as an ingenuous little artifice to prolong the impression of youth and innocence. But now it was unmistakably

ble astonishment that inspired the expression.

"I mean going around everywhere with Hugh Creswold," the girl continued, in a hard, high voice. "Do you know what they say? Do you know what they call me?"

"What do you mean?" asked her mother, with a premonition of trouble showing itself on her fair, smooth features. "What people say!" she burst out, with the instinct of self-defense; "don't people always gossip? Is there anyone we know they don't talk about? Don't be a fool!" she ended, abruptly.

"Listen, mother. Last night, coming out of the theatre, I overheard some women—common women—saying, 'There she is, the little chaperon! That's the mother and lover just in front of her.'"

"Ethel! how dare you say such a thing!"

The woman was roused. She knew all the import of such public comment. "It's infamous!" she exclaimed, repeating her daughter's words.

"At least, let us be honest with each other, mother," the girl said, coldly. "Deny it to the world, of course; so shall I. But my eyes are opened. I will never go out again with you—if we are to meet Mr. Creswold. You will have to arrange matters as you can," she concluded, bitterly. "You have lost your little chaperon."

"This is infamous!" repeated Mrs. Grahame, who strode up and down the room, angry, alarmed, perplexed. "To think of a girl's saying such abominable things to her own mother! Why did I have a daughter!"

"Yes, why did you have a daughter, when you have shown yourself so cruel—sacrificing her, without the slightest feeling, to your own vanity!" She glared at her mother with crimson cheeks and accusing eyes, her voice trembling in spite of her effort to keep it firm.

A suspicion came into Mrs. Grahame's mind. She looked keenly at her daughter, who stood like an of-

fended Diana in front of her. "Ethel!" she said, in a hushed, awe-stricken voice—"Ethel, it isn't true? You don't really——"

The girl yielded to the old affection. There was no one else, and her heart was full. She rushed toward her mother and fell into the outstretched arms, her slender body shaking with the emotion she could not control.

"My poor child! I have been a selfish, thoughtless, blind woman!" Mrs. Grahame's eyes filled with tears as she drew her daughter to a divan, where they sank down in a close embrace.

For a time there was silence, broken only by the girl's sobs. Then, slowly and with many pauses, Mrs. Grahame spoke:

"My dear child! you will believe me when I say there is nothing wrong. I have been a foolish woman, that I now see. I know how easy it is for malicious people to say nasty things. Forgive me, Ethel! I have known Mr. Creswold since you were a little girl. We liked each other. There was nothing wrong in that. He came to the house often. We met everywhere." Her arms tightened their clasp of her daughter's slender figure, as she continued, with an effort: "He's clever, handsome, agreeable. I was flattered by his attentions. Surely there's nothing wrong in that, Ethel!" She hesitated, and went on: "You know what your father is—all business. Creswold was useful, agreeable—a family friend. Your father likes him. That was all, Ethel, until you came out. And then . . . My darling, I never foresaw this! I never dreamed of it! He is so much older than you! I supposed he would still be the family friend. I knew he could do many nice things for you; but I never imagined for an instant even that you could . . . Why, he bought you candy and toys when you were a child! . . . What shall we do, Ethel? what shall we do?" Her voice ended in a wail, and the two women clung to each other, all suspicion and bitterness forgotten in the

discovery that shocked and frightened them.

"So the little chaperon takes her mother abroad!" exclaimed Mrs. Courthouse, the next day, when she heard that Mrs. Grahame and her daughter were going to the Riviera, "and without Creswold! Well, it's the unexpected that happens!"

"I'll bet on the mother," said Countryclub, in the billiard-room. "She's really going to do something for the girl. What with Creswold and her mother, the girl hadn't a chance here. When you begin to laugh at a girl, she's dished!"

That evening Hugh Creswold smoked a solitary cigar in front of his blazing hearth, from time to time re-reading a little note, brief, but evidently the cause of some serious reflection:

DEAR MR. CRESWOLD:

We have made a terrible mistake. It never occurred to you, as it certainly never did to me, that Ethel is no longer

a child. The woman has awakened—and I am wretched. What have we done in our thoughtlessness!

I am going to take her abroad for a few months, and when we return I hope everything will be all right. Ethel is the dearest of girls, and I do not think anybody is really good enough for her.

I beg you, do not come to see us now, nor send us any flowers. Please leave us entirely to ourselves for the present. Drop in to see Grahame while we are away.

Your old and contrite friend,

ELINOR HULINGS GRAHAME.

Saturday a.m.

As he smoked and read, a thought came to him that expressed itself in broken phrases. "It isn't possible! Such a difference in age! . . . She's a lovely girl, . . . but it seems so indelicate! . . . Ah, well! it was only a prolonged flirtation. . . . She's too nice a girl to be abused! In the Fall—if it lasts. . . ." And thus reminiscent and dreaming over the ashes of his dying fire, he fell asleep.



BLED HIM

BROOKS—Did the doctor feel your pulse?

BANKS—Yes; he even touched my pocketbook before he left.



SOMEWHAT OF A PUZZLE

WIFE—John, here is a picture I took of you with my kodak.

HUSBAND (*after looking at it*)—Great Scott! What did you take me for, my dear?



AN ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATION

BOBBIE—Pa, what happens when cars are telescoped?

FATHER—The passengers see stars, my son.

HOW SWEET THE ROSES!

WHO would believe they could deceive—
 Fair maidens, meek and lowly!
 In beauty and in grace they seem
 Blush-roses, pure and holy.
 Man counts a grief who his belief
 In woman's faith reposes;
 He gets a thorn-prick now and then—
 But oh! how sweet the roses!

GEORGE BIRDSEYE.



HE LOST NOTHING

SHE—So he loved and lost?
 HE—No; he merely didn't get her. She had no money.



NO TIME PROMISES

HE—So you think you could learn to love me?
 SHE—Yes, but I'm very forgetful.



DILATORY DISCOVERY

DE SAPPIE—I hadn't been talking with him five minutes before he called
 me an ass.
 SHE—Why the delay?



FAVORABLE CONDITIONS, CERTAINLY

BELLE—So Maude has accepted Charley! Would you have accepted him
 if you had been in her place?
 LENA—Very likely. She was in his lap at the time.